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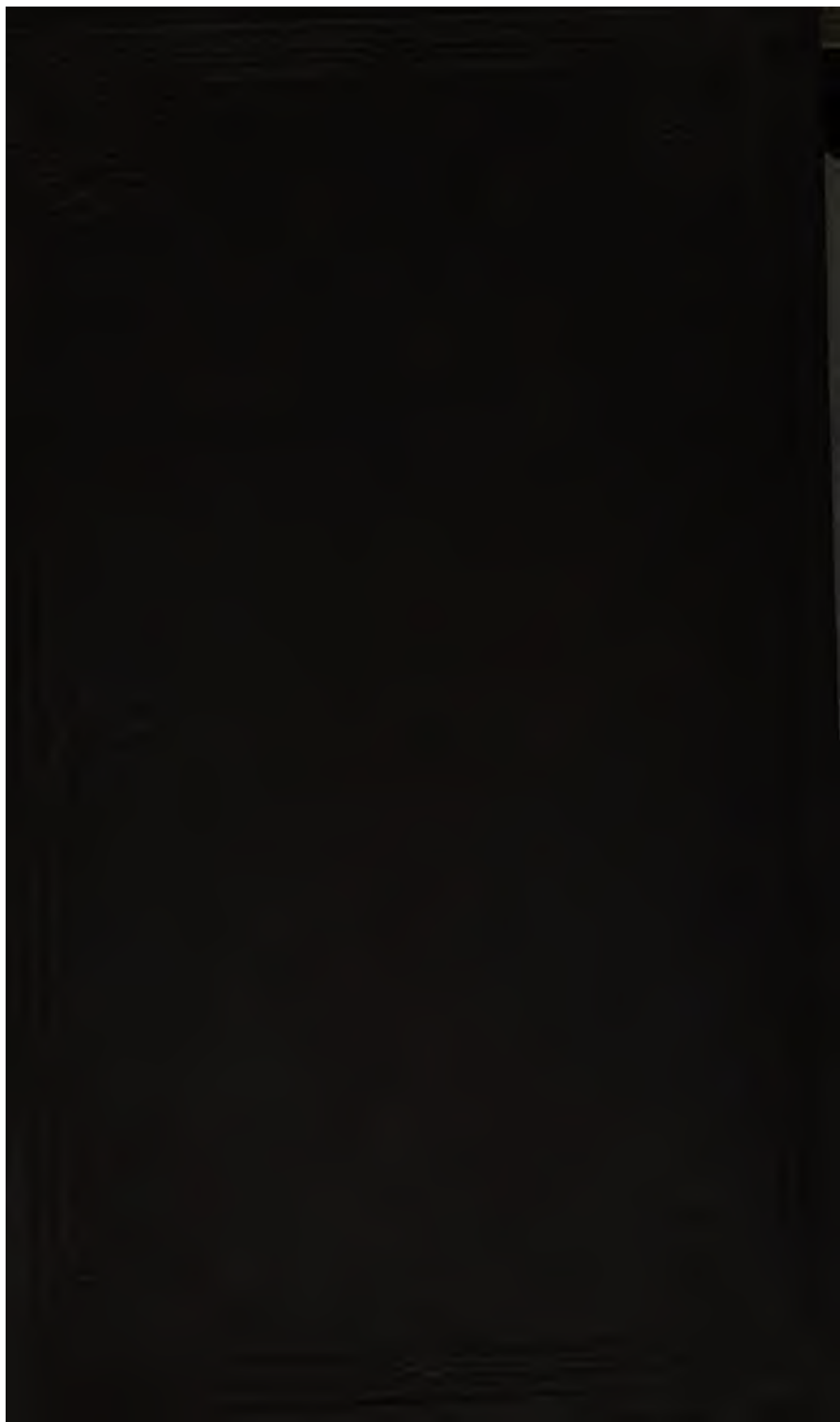
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BERNARD MARSH.

A NOVEL.

BY THE LATE

G. P. R. JAMES.

AUTHOR OF "RICHELIEU," "DARNLEY," &c., &c.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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BERNARD MARSH.



CHAPTER I.

ONE of the most curious histories which could be written would be that of the variation of taste. Wigs, powder, pigtails, hoops, wimples, fardingales, patches, and thunder and lightning stockings, have all had their adorers, have all been thought indispensable to fashion and taste, and then, in a few short years have been condemned as the most hideous monstrosities by a succeeding generation. But no man has had experience enough to compile such a history. The half-dozen variations which he may have seen in his own

time, could give but little illustration of the subject ; and, although I have faint reminiscences of powder, a vague idea of pigtails, and a distinct remembrance of ladies in tight gowns which gave them the appearance of being sewed up in eelskins, yet I do not consider that I have experience enough to treat the subject scientifically.

“ If a man could be sure
That his life would endure
For a thousand long years as of yore,”

he could lay himself out for such abstruse studies ; but at present I must confine myself to one of those changes in the taste of romance-reading mankind, which has occurred within my own knowledge, and has been somewhat puzzling to the fabricator of stories.

I remember quite well the time when long and minute descriptions of scenery, costume, armour, personal appearance—ay, and even character—were highly palatable to the

reader. The exquisite pictures afforded by the poems and romances of Sir Walter Scott were the delight of intelligent minds. Men felt in reading them as if they were gazing at the glorious handiwork of a Claude or Poussin ; but we have changed all that. We hear from the lips of every little critic deep condemnations of long and wearisome descriptions, and every sort of stimulant, from blood and thunder to philosophical infidelity, is required to excite the public taste. A dozen throats cut in one chapter, five or six young ladies seduced by one villain, with a reasonable admixture of gambling, swindling, drinking and lying, form the best sauce to any story that can be told ; and although every now and then a work appears, which, like the great " Novel " of Sir Edward Lytton, commands attention by its intrinsic power, few books can be produced in which cayenne pepper, in some shape, does not overbalance all the other condiments.

Now, dear reader, this is a long, laborious, but not altogether unnecessary excuse for beginning the following work by a description. The description, however, must be given, for it is impossible for any man to form an accurate conception of how any actions were performed, unless he have some knowledge of where they took place. For instance, what might have been done on Salisbury Plain could not be enacted on the top of one of the Pyramids of Egypt; and therefore it is that I am obliged to present a picture of the scene, in which many of the most important events about to be detailed took place.

At the distance of about five-and-twenty miles from Paris—which, in the days of which I write was a long distance, but is now abbreviated to a mere span—there stood an old French château.

It stands there still, for I have been in it, and have visited with some strange feelings

many, though not all, of its various nooks and corners—spots where persons not unconnected with me, lived and enjoyed, died or suffered. To call a French château, of any period after the reign of Francis I., a building of any style of architecture would be absolutely ridiculous. The pepper-box style might be as appropriate as any other name, and certainly might have been applied to the building in question, which consisted principally of numerous little towers, scattered about without much regularity, and joined together by flat, straight pieces of building of an older date apparently than the turrets themselves. A good many similar old buildings are still to be seen in Switzerland, where the heavy snows afford some reason for the slated foolscap-looking, conical roofs with which the various towers are surmounted. The material is grey stone, the windows narrow and small, the rooms spacious, and for the most part floored with tiles, waxed, painted and polished.

On the lower floor were some fifteen different chambers of various shapes and sizes, from the oblong dining-hall, with its enormous fire-place, to the small cabinet richly ornamented with arabesques and paintings of flowers in the mode of about a century before. The outside of the house had somewhat of a gloomy appearance ; but enough light and sunshine penetrated, even through these narrow windows, to give a gay, dry and wholesome air to the rooms within. The motes danced in the slanting rays ; and every hour saw a new pattern drawn on the floor by the lozenge-shaped panes of the lead casements. Around the house extended what was called a park—very different indeed from the English park, where Nature is very little assisted by Art, but cut into long alleys, separated from each other by screens of the yoke elm, and filled during the spring and summer months with every variety of singing bird.

Many of the winged wanderers from other countries, the hoppoe, the oriel, the woodcock, the wild pigeon, the turtle dove, found refuge among those shades ; but from the moment when, in early February, the thrush took his stand on the naked top bough, and heralded with his sweet carol the approach of warmer days, till the robin closed the year with his song amidst the snow, those long alleys and deep glades were full of music of nature's own melodious making.

The house was not a very convenient one, except in certain parts, where some architectural skill had been displayed—for instance, where the grand staircase swept up in two great masses with wide landings at the top, showing a boldness of design and skill in execution seldom met with in modern country houses. The other parts of the dwelling were strangely disjoined and irregular ; and it sometimes happened that where two chambers were actually contiguous, it required a walk

of nearly half round the house to reach the one from the other.

The furniture of the house bespoke not merely ease and wealth, but taste and refinement. Each room had at least two or three pictures in it, generally landscapes, though there were some very fine figure pieces by Italian artists; and here and there a little *étagère* was seen, with shelves displaying curious specimens of art or relics of the olden time. On the second floor, however, was a large gallery filled with pictures and busts, and next to it a small library. Beyond that was a large room having somewhat the appearance of a chapel, with several other chambers further on, and staircases going up and down, heaven knows where; for the ins and outs of that house were innumerable.

Such was the scene in which many of the events about to be recorded took place, and all that remains to be said upon this part of the subject is, that I have purposely abstained

from giving anything like a romantic tinge to the description of a place which was, in reality, only an old French château of the seventeenth century, large, roomy, and incommodious, but peculiar and characteristic of the age.

CHAPTER II.

IN the park, of which we have spoken in the preceding chapter, and on the evening of a summer's day in 164—, a lady and gentleman in the prime of life walked slowly up and down, conversing gravely but not eagerly, while ever and anon he would pause for a moment, and trace with the point of his sheathed sword what seemed the plan of a town or a battle-field. Two handsomer people have seldom been seen; and Time had laid his hand lightly on the head of either, though a grey hair here and there showed that the passage of days had not been without its effect. The lady's face was beauti-

fully fair, and not a line or wrinkle showed the work of age; but the face of her companion told tales of exposure and of strife. There was a deep scar upon his right cheek, and an indentation on his left brow, covered over with a black patch, as if the wound which had made it was barely healed. He was active and vigorous, however, though somewhat spare in form; and his face had more the expression of joy than cheerfulness; for, although his eye lighted up when he looked down upon the beautiful countenance of his beloved wife, yet from time to time a look of sad and earnest thought would come like the shadow of a deep cloud upon him, and only pass away when the musical tones of her sweet voice sounded in his ear.

“Thank God, Edward,” she said, “thank God, though there is much to mourn, yet you are safe with your wife and children again. You know, my beloved, that, not for all the happiness a world could give, would I have with-

held you from your duty to your King and your country ; but that duty has been done well and nobly, and though it has pleased God to frustrate your efforts, to disappoint your hopes, ay, and even to impair your fortune, Heaven has restored you to me in safety ; and therefore let us give thanks for what is granted, and not murmur because something is refused."

" God forbid ! my Lucette," said Sir Edward Langdale ; " but yet, if I am somewhat grave, forgive me. I feel all the joy of my return ; but when I think of the state of my country and my King, I cannot but feel bitter sorrow for the past, and sad misgivings for the future. What a strange thing is fate ! Buckley is gone, and all that the best fortune which could befall had given me in England ; but here, by strange chances, more has been given than has been taken away ; and, with a new country, I have found a better fate."

The words, though they were hopeful, seemed to throw both the speaker and her whom he addressed, into a fit of thought; and they walked on towards the old château I have described, without uttering a word for some moments, at length, however, the lady said, musingly,

“Surely, they will never kill the King!”

Her husband shook his head.

“I cannot tell, my Lucette,” he said, “but they have him totally in their power, and they have slain so many of the best and noblest of the land, that who shall say they will not carry their iniquity a step further? It was not believed when I was in England; and, indeed, the great body of the people seemed to regard the very idea with horror; but there are bold bad men among them who may even desire to compromise the rest beyond all return. They are affecting to treat with the King even now; but I cannot discover anything in their proceedings indicative

of sincerity. The monarchy is gone—that is clear to me; and the life of his Majesty is at the disposal of traitors. I have very little hope, Lucette.”

While they had been thus speaking, they had advanced near enough to the château to hear, through the open windows, some one singing, in a very sweet voice, and apparently with a great knowledge of music, as the science was understood in those days; and both stopped to listen.

“Surely, that is not Lucy’s voice,” said the gentleman, pausing; “if it be, it has fallen several notes since I was here.”

“That is, a man’s voice, I think,” answered Lucette. “It certainly is not Lucy. She cannot sing so well as that.”

And, hurrying their pace, they entered the château. Proceeding straight forward past the foot of the great staircase, they turned into a room to the right, from which the sound seemed to proceed. It was evidently used

as a music room ; for various instruments of music were scattered about, and several of the curious old music books of those days were lying on tables, and even on chairs. Seated near the window, which was open, was a young man of about three-and-twenty years of age, dressed with exceeding plainness, but with a very great taste. His garb was of that beautiful form and arrangement which we see so frequently represented by the pencil of Vandyck. The collar, it is true, was of plain linen, as were also the turned-up wristbands, but they were cut into the most beautiful shapes, and every line of the garments which he wore seemed to flow into one another with an easy grace which made, as it were, the poetry of costume. The cloth of the coat was not fine, nor was it, as sometimes happened in that age, gaudy in colouring ; but every hue was so blended that, to use what some people may consider contra-

dictory language, harmony was produced by opposition.

One of the most wonderful things, among all the wonderful anomalies of this anomalous world, becomes apparent if we take a picture of Vandyck, put it by the side of one of the horse-hair bewigged gentlemen of the reign of Anne or George I, and compare them both, the one with the other, and the two with a living and moving human animal of the present day. How the mind of man could ever go on in a process of degradation such as to descend from the admirable forms displayed by the pencil of Vandyck and many who preceded him, to the stiff rigidity of John, Duke of Marlborough, or William, Duke of Cumberland, is at first sight perfectly inexplicable. But if my theory be correct, and costume be the great exponent of the character of the age, the change is easily accounted for. The French seem to have felt this continually, but not to have

defined it. We have even given the name to certain collars used in the time of the first French Revolution, of *colliers à la guillotine*, from the facility which they afforded for cutting a gentleman's head off without the trouble of unbuttoning them.

The young gentleman of whom we now speak was dressed in the complete habiliments of a cavalier of those times ; but all exceedingly plain—the lovelocks even were not wanting, but hung down upon his shoulders in magnificent bunches of curls, while the shorter hair over his forehead, by its natural wave, showed that no art had been used to produce the ringlets at the side.

On his knee was lying a Venetian mandolin, with which he had been accompanying his voice ; and his hand was still straying over the strings when the master and mistress of the mansion entered.

As soon as he perceived them, he rose, slim and almost delicate in form, took up his

hat from the ground, and advancing with a slight degree of hesitation, said, in a low, sweet tone, and in the English language.

"I presume I have the honour of seeing Sir Edward Langdale."

"The same, Sir," said the other. "May I know whom I have the pleasure of welcoming to my house—pray be seated."

"This will explain, Sir," said the young stranger, producing a letter, and handing it to him.

Sir Edward Langdale took it with a polite but somewhat cold aspect, and seated himself, again waving the stranger to a chair. It was clear that the appearance of his visitor did not impress him with any great feelings of respect. His nature had been very much softened since his youth; he had gained gentleness of heart; the gentler, the finer portions of his nature had obtained room and nurture; his Lucette had been all to him, and more than all that he had expected; and

the blooming boys and girls which had arisen around his footsteps, had awakened and developed the sweetest, holiest, most beautiful sympathies of our nature. But still Edward Langdale, in manner at least, was not soft. It is a curious fact, that those who are most truly tender, can sometimes seem most hard ; he could sport with a child as if he were a child himself ; no true tale of sorrow met his ear in vain ; but the quick, sharp answer, the keen, stern inquiry, prompt decision, and the steady determined action afforded no previous promise of the gentler and kinder treatment which was sure to be produced by a worthy object. It is another curious fact that, in very many instances, disposition—I must not call it nature, is more frequently fundamentally affected by external influences, especially in youth, than mere manner. The water hollows the stone, while it leaves hardly a trace upon the sands ; and I am inclined to go a little further than the old axiom, that

“habit is second nature,” and to believe that this second nature is of a harder and firmer fabric than the first.

However that may be, all that could be said of Sir Edward Langdale’s manner was, that it was coldly polite. There was no stateliness, no affectation of dignity, but there was no warmth—none of what the French call effusion. The young stranger appeared, however, not the least abashed, he seemed to expect no more, but seating himself with a very graceful inclination of the head to Lady Langdale, who was quitting the room, he waited in a still and easy position, while her husband read the letter brought to him.

What was in that letter will appear presently ; but its immediate effect upon Sir Edward was strange. The Cavalier rose from his chair, fixed his eyes upon the ground, not sternly but thoughtfully, and walked up and down the room two or three times without a word. Then suddenly stopping with a

sort of start before the young stranger, he held out his hand to him, saying,

“Excuse me, Sir, I am glad to see you, though I may have seemed somewhat rude; but this letter proposes to me matters which I have never contemplated, but which must not be refused, in the circumstances which surround you. This is a very quiet home, Sir, a home of domestic tranquillity and affection, into which we have made it a point to let the world at large intrude itself but seldom. My wife, full of high accomplishments, and happy in the task, can bestow upon my daughter such an education as no girl can receive but from her mother. Of my boys, one is too young for all but rudimental teaching; another receives his education partly from myself, partly from the old man who dwells in that small house you see from the window. His military exercises have lately been greatly interrupted, I am sorry to say, by my absence from France in

the unfortunate cause of a beloved Monarch. Young as he was, I would have taken him with me; but I have no right to deprive a wife, who was every day likely to lose her husband, of a stay which might be most needful to her."

"There have been lads as young, as beloved, as precious," said the young stranger, in a grave but gentle tone, "who have fought in the same fields where you have fought, Sir Edward, and shared the same reverses that you have suffered. But I know," he continued hastily, seeing a slight flush come upon Sir Edward Langdale's cheek, and his lip quiver as if for a reply, "but I know, at least I have been told, that you are peculiarly situated, that your lady is a French woman, her estate is greatly depending on the male heir, and the devotion of your own life and service to his cause, was all that your monarch could desire, more, perhaps, than he could expect."

Edward Langdale eyed him from head to foot, with a thoughtful and almost an inquiring look.

“You seem well acquainted with these matters, Sir,” he said, “and, it is probable from the contents of the letter you brought me, that some of your friends, if not yourself, have served his Majesty.”

“My friends and my relations, both, have tried to serve him,” answered the young man; “but we all know they have had little success. Indeed, those who try hardest, after their own fashion, generally meet with the least success, unless they will be convinced that a man who can see two miles, has a wider view than a man who can only see one.”

“If I understand you rightly,” answered his companion, “you would imply that the King’s best friends have not always been his most obedient subjects, his most faithful officers somewhat insubordinate soldiers. This is the fertile source of great disaster,

Sir, and I heartily agree with you. My own rule has been to obey the orders I receive when they were given to me by my superior in command, and to follow my own judgment only, when there was no one present who had a right to command me. But let us talk of other things. I find that you are a skilful musician."

The young gentleman smiled.

"A part of my life was passed in Italy, Sir Edward," said he, "the land of music, and indeed of all the arts; and it was not to be expected that my constitution could resist the infection."

"I did not know that art was a disease," said Sir Edward Langdale, "although, to say the truth, being master of no art myself, I am no great judge in such matters."

"I should judge the contrary," said the young man, pointing to some beautiful small pictures on the walls. "That group of children must be from the hand of Albano;

and that Guercino is a masterpiece. They were never chosen by one who has no knowledge of art."

"I have some finer than these," replied Sir Edward Langdale, warming with a subject of which he was fond. "I will show them to you by-and-by; but in the meantime, all I can say, in answer to this letter, is, that I shall be happy to give you such protection and assistance as I can afford. In regard to my receiving you as tutor to my two younger children, as his Royal Highness Prince James requests, methinks it is a situation inferior to your abilities and your education; might I not also say to your birth?"

"I aspire to nothing higher," replied the young gentleman; and then added, "it often happens, Sir Edward, that persons not humbly born, by accidental circumstances become proficient in many branches of learning, which others, apparently more favourably situated, never acquire at all. The necessity of labour-

ing for one's bread, for instance—looked upon by the world in general as a great misfortune—is sometimes, on the contrary, the greatest of blessings. It gives health and strength to body and mind. It fosters and directs a just ambition, and it teaches a man to respect himself by giving him a knowledge of the powers within him. I am very poor, as probably the Duke has told you ; but that is not my fault. It may be my fault if I remain so ; and therefore I am resolved, even at my early age, to commence that honest exertion which is likely to be my course through life.”

Sir Edward Langdale, as is very customary with men of his peculiar temperament, had the habit, when somewhat puzzled or desirous to think deeply, to rise suddenly and walk up and down the chamber or any other place where he might be at the time. He now took some ten or twelve turns before he made any answer, and then merely replied, “ Well, Sir, well, it shall be as you desire. A room

shall be provided for you immediately. There are plenty in this house."

"So I perceive," said the young man, dryly.

"To-morrow the children shall begin their studies," said Sir Edward; "and now let us transact the business part of the affair, and see what you require as compensation for the trouble you are going to undertake."

A conversation of five minutes settled all that referred to salary, and then calling for a servant, the master of the house led his young companion to a room on the lower story of the left wing, to which he ordered the good old man, Pierrot, to bring the stranger's baggage.

"What am I to do with the horse, Sir?" demanded Pierrot.

"Put him in the stable, of course," replied his master; and Pierrot retired and shut the door; but when, at the end of some five minutes, Sir Edward came out, leaving the

young man behind him, he found his old follower still standing in the passage.

“His luggage is small enough,” said Pierrot, stepping up to his master with an air of mystery. “Only two saddle-bags.”

“Well, Pierrot, when you first knew me, I had not much more.”

“But the horse, the horse!” exclaimed Pierrot; “it is as fine a charger as was ever crossed by man.”

CHAPTER III.

A FEW days, a few hours, often comprises all that really merits the name of a man's life-time ; and then again there are pauses of months, perhaps years, in which little is done, said, or thought, which deserves even the record of memory. But there are periods which, without any apparent action, prepare the way for more important things. I must not call them mixed periods ; for they are so tranquil and quiet, so completely without the agitation of feeling and the energy of deed, that they are often forgotten afterwards, and the dull mind of man fails to perceive what

important influence they have had upon his future fate.

One of these periods succeeded the few little incidents we have last noticed in the château of Belaye. All matters went on as they had done before. The young stranger's arrival and admission into the family had made hardly a perceptible change; and his time was so taken up with the instructions he had undertaken to give, and with private studies of his own, that he saw little of the lord and lady of the mansion, except during the hours of meals.

Let us, however, give a picture of the family circle round the board on one of these occasions, as some of the personages there gathered together will have to appear upon the scene again hereafter.

With Sir Edward Langdale the reader is already acquainted, and also with his sweet wife, Lucette, hardly less lovely, though with a different sort of loveliness, than when she

fled from Rochelle with him who is now her husband. In addition to these were the eldest daughter and the eldest son of the house—the first a young girl of some seventeen years of age, very like her mother in feature and expression, but with her father's dark hair and long black eyelashes. The eldest son was a fine lad of about sixteen, fair as his mother, and remarkably handsome, but with a somewhat delicate look and slender form. He was too tall, perhaps, for his age; and Sir Edward would sometimes gaze at him with a feeling of anxiety regarding his future health, while his mother's heart would sink at what she thought the signs of premature decay. Besides these two, were two other rosy and robust children of nine and ten years of age, whom we may not pause to describe, as we must hurry on to more active scenes.

The seventh person at that table was the young stranger, to whom we must now give a

name, and it had better be that by which he was known in the family, namely, "Master Bernard Marsh." With the two younger children, towards whom he now acted in the capacity of tutor, he had rapidly ingratiated himself; and they would cling to him with almost brotherly affection whenever he bestowed upon them a few minutes out of the hour of study. This was rare, however, for he did not show himself disposed to mingle much with the family, retiring commonly to his own chamber as soon as the lessons were over, and taking little or no exercise except during one hour of the autumnal evenings, when he would seek out one of the most solitary alleys of the park, and there pace up and down, apparently buried in deep thought. Sometimes, at the dinner-table, he would converse fluently with Sir Edward Langdale upon literature and art, and with young Henry Langdale he would jest gaily; but with Lady Langdale and her

eldest daughter his conversation was confined to a few words of common courtesy when they met and when they parted. Indeed, to say sooth, the fair Lucy might have felt a little piqued with his utter indifference to her beauty, her grace and her accomplishments, had she not been educated in so much seclusion that she was ignorant and innocent of all the various arts and coquetry of the day. As it was, she thought him a very common place young man, handsome, beyond doubt, and learned, but very cold and somewhat shy. Lady Langdale might see a little deeper—and Sir Edward Langdale certainly did, for he had made the young man's character a study from the first moment he had entered the family, and thought he perceived underneath his cold manner traits very different from those which appeared upon the surface. At first, indeed, he had been induced to think him a little frivolous

—to judge that his taste for the arts, and especially for music, had softened him and rendered him effeminate; but every now and then, across his ordinarily calm demeanour, came a flash of vigorous thought which spoke a mind of no small power and energy.

It may be remembered that when the young gentleman first appeared at the château he had a four-footed friend with him, which Pierrot La Grange had pronounced as fine a charger as ever man bestrode; but Master Bernard never mounted him, though he would often walk into the stable, pat his neck, and rub his hand gently over two curious looking scars, on each of the good beast's fore legs. The horse seemed very fond of him, however, and the moment his step sounded in the stable, the ears would be raised, and the head turned, and a short neigh of pleasure would welcome his young master.

It is a very dangerous thing in this good

world in which we live to have any small peculiarities. Great eccentricities—oddities of a remarkable character, as some old authoress said, “set us in our easy chair for life;” but beware of anything that smacks of mystery; it sets that blind and stupid, but staunch and persevering dog, Curiosity, yelping at your heels: it is the scent of the deer upon the grass, and were you the pet fawn of the hound’s master, that same dog would have his fangs in your flank before he gave over the chase. Now Master Bernard afforded matter for much speculation in the château of Belaye. His quiet and solitary habits, his accomplishments—for even the servants soon found out he was highly accomplished—made him the object of comment and observation; and then there was that wonderful fact that nobody knew who he was, or whence he came. I refer of course to the domestics and retainers of the house;

but even Sir Edward Langdale himself was not without a certain degree of—what shall I call it? Not curiosity, for it had none of the vulgar portion of that very vulgar propensity; but of puzzle. He never inquired why the young man did this or that, what were the motives for his absenting himself continually from the family circle where he was treated with kindness and courtesy; he asked no questions as to the past, the present or the future; but he did wonder at much that he saw, and would have been glad of further explanations. It is true that he had received a letter by the young man's hands from the second son of his sovereign, which might well repress anything like indiscreet curiosity; and there were events always taking place in France which—though he was resolved to take no share in them—occupied much of his attention; but he remarked with regret that his new companion

neglected all healthful exercise, that the cheek became paler, the eye more anxious, and that the song heard occasionally from the little chamber in the left wing was less frequent, and generally of a more melancholy tone. A feeling of undefined sympathy took possession of him, and, whereas at first he had felt that sort of superiority which trenches on contempt, often experienced by men of action and energy for men of thought and fancy, he began to acquire an interest in the young man nearly allied to friendship.

One day towards the end of September, on a bright and beautiful morning, the whole party were just concluding their breakfast, when Sir Edward suddenly burst forth with the words, "Children, this is a remarkable day in my life, and we will have a holiday. Master Bernard, you want more exercise; come out and join us in a long ride, for we are going through the forest to the table

of stone, where our ancient Kings of France used sometimes to hold their *cours plenières* ; and there we will have our dinner and fancy ourselves as good as Peer or Paladin."

The young gentleman looked down for an instant and thought ; and then replied,

"Well, Sir, I am at your command ; I presume that the party will be small, for, to say truth, I am not much fitted for society."

"None but ourselves," replied Sir Edward ; and then he added, in rather a significant tone, "there is no chance of our meeting any one ; for I imagine that since the days of Childebert, not ten persons have passed along that road in four-and-twenty hours. What horse will you ride ?"

"My own, Sir," replied the young man.

"He has not been out for weeks," replied Sir Edward, "and it might be well to have him exercised before you ride him."

The young man smiled slightly, saying,

"He knows me well, Sir, and is not vicious."

In little more than an hour, horses for all the party were before the gates. Lady Langdale and her daughter were speedily mounted, and Sir Edward and the lads had their feet in the stirrups; but the fine bay charger of Master Bernard was fretting and prancing in the hands of two grooms, who could hardly restrain him, now pawing the ground, now rearing, as if the fiery spirit long unexercised could hardly be restrained. The young man approached his side, while the eye of Sir Edward Langdale, as that of an experienced cavalier, was fixed upon him, perhaps in some doubt, perhaps with a little anxiety. But there was only one word and one movement.

"Stand!" and with one vault, without ever touching the stirrup, Bernard Marsh was in the saddle, and as erect as a statue. The

horse dashed forward as if to get before all the rest; but after one wild shake of the head and tug at the bridle, he was completely under command, and as gentle as a lamb.

The ride was a very beautiful one of some eight or ten miles in length, through a country which could not be called hilly, but which undulated and varied at every step, now passing through rich vineyards and fields, now cutting across one of those little woods which diversify that part of France, now rising a gentle eminence from which a wide extending view of the surrounding scenery might be obtained, now sinking into a deep dell, along the bottom of which ran a clear and sparkling stream. During the first part of the way, the aspect of all things was cheerful and lively. The peasantry were working in the fields, and cheering their labours with a song; the trees were full of birds making the air melodious with the last carols of the year, and the large

and beautiful butterflies were still abroad, ending their brief existence in the sobered sunshine of the early autumn.

Every passion is infectious, or rather there is that natural tendency to sympathy in the mind of man, that sixty centuries of crime and suffering have not been able to extinguish the feelings of brotherhood with all things which God implanted originally in the human heart. To laugh with those who laugh, to weep with those who weep, is the natural tendency of every one; and we are inclined to take part in all that is joyous; if it be but the happiness of beasts that perish, or the gay aspect of even an inanimate scene. The mind is as it were a mirror reflecting the objects around it, and taking from all a colouring not its own. The whole party became merry, and even Master Bernard himself shook off the reserve and gravity of his ordinary demeanour, and laughed and chatted

with a cheerful countenance and an open heart.

At the end of five or six miles, however, the road descended slowly and gradually showing a wide scene of undulating forest ground beyond. The rows of tall walnut trees which had hitherto bordered the path on either side became broken, and then ceased ; the cultivated fields ended, the house of the farmer and the cabin of the labourer disappeared, great oaks and horse chestnuts took the place of the fruit tree and the vine, till suddenly taking a sharp turn and an abrupt descent, the whole party found themselves in the forest of Bourg, near the spot where a forester's cottage stood, with a large clear well of beautiful water by its side. The old man himself was sitting at his door, carving a sundial on a stick, and whistling sweetly some long-forgotten tune, taking hardly any notice of the cavalcade, whose horses' feet he

must have heard. The whole party, however, stopped to let their beasts drink, and Sir Edward Langdale rode up to the old man, saying,

“Why, Robin, you seem to have forgotten me.”

The forester started up the moment he heard his voice, exclaiming,

“God bless me, monseigneur”—everybody was monseigneur with the peasantry in those days—“why, I thought that you were in foreign lands, fighting for the good King of England. Some one told me so, I am sure, and I have not seen you for this two years.”

“I have come back, good Robin,” said Sir Edward, “and trust to spend some peaceful days with you yet; but what makes you look grave and desponding, good man? You were hanging down your head when we came up, as if you were resolved not to see us.”

“The times are bad, Sir,” said Robin,

"and many a person passes by here now-a-days whom it is not safe to see. Why, it is not three hours since there was a whole party of them killed one of the King's deer within sight of the cottage door. They would not have dared to do that in the old King's reign, when the great Cardinal was living. But I can do nothing now to stop them. In those times I could bring up ten men with the blast of a horn; but the men get no pay, so they won't stay under this new Cardinal and this little boy."

"Well, we have not come to hunt the King's deer," replied Sir Edward; "but merely to take our dinner at the *Table de Pierre*. It is all safe up there, I suppose."

"Oh, ay," replied the forester, "the rogues have been gone a couple of hours, each man carrying a bloody quarter behind him, and they are not likely to come back very soon; besides you have plenty of people with you."

Now the plenty of people of whom good Robin spoke, consisted only of Sir Edward Langdale and his son, Master Bernard Marsh, two mounted grooms, and a third leading a pack-horse for the conveyance of their provisions; these, together with the ladies and the younger children, formed a tolerably large cavalcade; but no one felt any fear, and the news that there were some rogues in the forest did not startle any one. Indeed, some years before, there would have been no need of alarm; but times were a good deal changed since Sir Edward Langdale had last left the shores of France for England. The feeble, cunning, but successful rule of Cardinal Mazarin, had brought about great disorders in the country; the civil wars of the Fronde had begun, and many parts of the land, as well as the immediate neighbourhood of the court, were greatly disturbed both by the contending

factions, and by that general license which is sure to follow ill-established power. What the poet calls "the ancient rule—the good old plan" was very largely adopted; and the strong hand, I fear, was sometimes too often felt in various parts of France.

However, Sir Edward and his party rode gaily on, forgetting in a few minutes all about the gentlemen who had been helping themselves to the King's venison, and talking about the magnitude of the old oaks (some of which they stopped to measure); the beauty of the sparkling stream, which they crossed at least a dozen times; and the loveliness of the scene in general, whether in those deep misty glades which the eye could hardly penetrate, or the ever dancing light and shade which streamed through the leaves and branches, checquering their path as with a curiously varied pavement. At the end of about two miles, or two miles and a half, a

little, even lawn in the very heart of the wood opened before them ; and there, shaded by the long branches, stood the table of stone, a long, flat slab, some sixteen feet in length, by perhaps eight in width, supported by four smaller stones at the four corners. Perhaps it was a druidical monument originally ; but tradition said that there the feudal lords of the soil, and even the Kings of France themselves, had held their *cours plenières*, and judged their subjects, or revelled with their vassals. The meal upon the present occasion was destined probably to be a more moderate one than those old times had seen ; but yet it was plentiful and gay ; and care and thought, and probably memory and regret, were for the time forgotten. With that common revulsion of feeling which so frequently drives men into excess, the gayest perhaps of the whole party was the thoughtful and somewhat gloomy Master Bernard

Marsh. He laughed, he jested, he talked gayly with Lady Langdale and Lucy; he gathered the wild autumn flowers with the boys, and ran after the gaudy butterflies. He seemed almost a child himself, and probably in the midst of a sad and laborious life, he was determined to have one day at least of bright and unmingled enjoyment.

Thus ran by the hours till towards four o'clock, with the servants sitting around and enjoying themselves as much as their masters, when Sir Edward Langdale thought that it was nearly time to return to the château. Then, as they lingered for a few minutes, Lady Langdale asked Master Bernard if he would not give them a parting song. They knew he could sing beautifully, she said, for they had heard him accidentally more than once. He answered with a smile, that perhaps he sang better when he did not know that any one was listening to him. He com-

plied, however, at once, without affectation, singing somewhat after the following manner :

THE DYING SOLDIER'S LAMENT.

I.

Where is the love o'er childhood's slumber bending,
While drops the tear from the maternal eye,
Prophetic fear with heaven-born hope still blending,
Chastening proud pleasure with the timid sigh;
Where is the love?

II.

Where is the love, more warm but less enduring,
That twines youth's brow with coronals of flowers,
While hope stands by, deluded hearts assuring
A long expanse of bright and sunny hours :
Where is the love?

III.

Where is that love, while sad and mangled lying
On the dark battle-field my limbs are cast,
And my crushed heart for long gone moments sighing,
Turns faintly back unto the happy past ;
Where is that love?

IV.

Where is that love ? In Heaven, with those who bore it,
Who long have left me on this earth alone.
Sweet spirits ! in your blessed mansions store it,
For I am coming quick to claim mine own,
There is that love.

The voice was exquisitely sweet, the science was perfect, so far as the science of music had advanced in that day ; and none hung upon the song more profoundly occupied than Lucy Langdale, whose ear and taste were as fine and delicate as those of her mother.

Sir Edward, moved as he always was by music, sat with his eyes fixed upon the table of stone, while the servants were removing the various implements which had been used at their simple dinner, when suddenly a slight cry from Lady Langdale, and the touch of her hand upon his arm, made him raise his eyes. The first sight he saw was the gleam of some half dozen carbines pointed at his

party from amongst the trees just opposite, and before he had time to draw his sword, a number of men from behind him had rushed down and were pinioning his arms with the horses' bridles. The gentlemen with the carbines then came down from the opposite side, with no very formidable gestures, for they were shouting with laughter, but in sufficient numbers to make all opposition fruitless. A scene of confusion and disarray followed, which can hardly be described. The strangers were for the most part masked or otherwise disguised; and it was difficult to discover either by their apparel or their manner whether the attack had been made by a party of marauders, or whether the whole affair was merely a bad joke. They laughed, they jested, according to the light spirit of the times and the country; and certainly their language was curiously and, in some degree, artificially re-

fined; but their garments were not a little tattered, and they made no scruple of tying the servants, who had been overpowered in a moment, or of bestowing two or three good buffets upon Pierrot La Grange, who was the only person that offered anything like serious resistance.

“We hope you have dined well, sir,” said a gentleman with a blue scarf, addressing Sir Edward Langdale, with a low and ceremonious bow; “we would not have interrupted you at your meal, seeing that we ourselves are as full of good venison as we can hold, but we are exceedingly thirsty, having had nothing to drink but a small quantity of a pure and doubtless very salubrious beverage, called water, which is a drink that none of us are much accustomed to. You will invite us I know to partake of your wine, and therefore, without waiting for ceremony, we will help ourselves;” and

thus saying, he filled up a brimming glassful from some bottles which were still on the table, and was followed by most of his companions.

“Madame, be not the least alarmed,” said another, addressing Lady Langdale, “we are the most civilized people upon the face of the earth. We may perhaps have to disencumber you of some of those worldly goods which sadly impede our poor humanity in the way to grace, but we know the charitable disposition of our friends so well that we do not doubt they will gladly contribute a small sum to help a body of poor gentlemen on their way home; for upon my life and soul I don’t think amongst us all there is a crown piece to buy any one of us a new cravat.”

“Gentlemen,” said Sir Edward Langdale, “this bantering is all very well; but as we must also find our way home, you would oblige

me if you would come to the point. You have us in your power, and presuming that it is our money that you seek, I would willingly give you my purse if I could put my hand into my pocket. If you choose, however, to unloose me you shall have it, as resistance is quite in vain with such a disparity of numbers."

"Of course it is, Sir Edward," said the personage in the blue scarf, "but the fact is we want to raise a loan, much in the same way that our ancient monarch used to do, by very gentle compulsion. Your hands, therefore, shall be untied, though we could help ourselves for that matter; but in truth we shall require our bridles. Therefore, have the kindness politely and civilly to put 'down your purse upon the table. Jean, untie the good knight's arms."

"With infinite pleasure, monseigneur," replied the man whom he addressed, and the

leather strap was immediately taken from Sir Edward's arms. While the marauders, or whoever they were, were thickly mingling with Sir Edward's party, paying courtly compliments to Lady Langdale, uttered with every external sign of courtesy, yet in a somewhat jesting tone, Sir Edward took his purse from his pocket and laid it gravely on the table, saying, "help yourselves, gentlemen."

The man in the blue scarf deliberately poured out the money and counted it. "Only a hundred and ten crowns," he said; "is that all? that will not make ten crowns a head to us."

"All I have, upon my word," replied Sir Edward.

"I would feign borrow that diamond ring upon your finger," rejoined the stranger. "The brilliants are large and apparently of a very fine water."

"You must take it if you will, Sir," said Sir Edward, in a very grave tone, "but you might nearly as well take my life. That ring was given me by my King, on the night after a successful battle; and I thought to have carried it with me to my grave."

"Nevertheless, I must borrow it, Sir," replied the stranger, "at least, for a time; and although you may think I am joking, I will add this much: It shall be returned to you perfectly safe within a few weeks, if I live." He spoke in a graver and more courteous tone, and Sir Edward Langdale immediately took the ring from his finger and laid it on the table beside the money. Of course a great deal of noise and confusion had been going on in the little arena where the conversation had taken place, but we must recollect that those were days in which events were not extraordinary that would

now seem extravagant. The wars of the great rebellion in England produced not a few of these strange doings; but still more were enacted in France during the wars of the Fronde, which were then, perhaps, at their height. Thus, levity supplied the place of earnestness; religion was not even a pretence, and every conceivable sort of wildness and rashness was displayed by every party. Thus men's minds were habituated to scenes and circumstances which at other times would have produced surprise and consternation; and very little astonishment was felt at anything that was strange and daring, from whatever quarter it came.

Nevertheless, all was confusion, as may well be supposed, when a body of some thirteen or fourteen armed men intruded themselves with such doubtful intentions upon a little social party like that of Sir

Edward Langdale's. Each one was separated from the other; the only one who had his hands free on the one side was Sir Edward himself, and seven or eight men with carbines in their hands kept the others apart, under that moral compulsion which proceeds from powder and ball, and others were continually passing backwards and forwards, giving orders, bringing up horses, and storing up silver goblets and other convertible articles in havresacs and such receptacles.

A space of perhaps less than ten minutes concluded the whole; and then the gentleman in the blue scarf raised his hat with the air of a prince, saying, "Sir Edward, we are sorry to be obliged to put you under some degree of compulsion, but, as you are aware, necessity has no law. We leave you at liberty in five minutes to untie your companions. I need hardly tell

you that with your force and ours, and with the distance between you and your resources which exists, any attempt at pursuit would be in vain. You will hear from me again, when anything that now seems wrong will be made right. Mount, gentlemen, mount! never mind your curb reins; you can ride for once upon the snaffle."

Thus saying, he flung himself upon a very fine horse which stood by, and galloped away at the head of his party.

It must not be said that Sir Edward Langdale waited the five minutes prescribed ere he proceeded to unloose every one of the party; and then, with an air of anxiety, and even trepidation, which was unusual with him, ran his eye rapidly from face to face, exclaiming, in a tone difficult to describe, "Where is Lucy—where is Lucy?"

Every one looked round; and then it was

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Every one looked round; and then it was

found that two of the party were missing. Lucy Langdale and Master Bernard Marsh were no longer amongst them.

CHAPTER IV

NIGHT was falling fast, and the party of horsemen rode on at a quick pace, without ever drawing a rein. They went in somewhat military array, the man in the blue scarf and another well dressed cavalier leading the way. Behind them came a party of four, with a young lady in the midst, on whom two of the horsemen seemed to bestow much care and attention, one of them holding the bridle and the other steadying her in the saddle, where the inequalities of the road, or the rapid rate at which they were proceeding, rendered her

seat insecure. At the same time they continued to address her in words of comfort and assurance, telling her that no harm was intended her, that she would be perfectly well treated, and that a lady of the highest rank was awaiting to receive her with feelings of the utmost kindness and affection.

The poor girl replied not, seeming dismayed, and totally overwhelmed with her situation ; but in the meantime a conversation was going on between the two personages at the head of the troop, of which she was the unconscious object.

“ I don't like it at all,” said the man in the blue scarf ; “ you had no buisness to do this. It is wrong in every respect ; it must more or less delay us in our efforts to get back into the city, if it does not frustrate us entirely. Then, again, how is the matter to be explained, when the whole is investigated, as it certainly will be ? ”

"How are your exploits to be explained, my lord?" asked the other, with a laugh; "although great allowance will be made, doubtless, for your high rank, yet a Prince of the blood royal turning cut-purse, is not easily accounted for."

"That will be explained in a moment," replied the other. "Cut off from the city with my small party, without a sou in our pockets, and obliged to find our way back somehow, money was absolutely necessary. Of course I intend to return it to the man as soon as I get to Paris."

"Well, well, you wanted the money," replied the other, "and I wanted the girl. Madame de Chevreuse may send her back again if she likes. All I know is that I promised to bring her, if I could catch her, though one of the boys would have done as well, only they stuck so close to their mother there was no separating them."

“And, of course, you expect payment of some kind,” said his companion.

“I hope for it, of the sweetest kind,” replied the other, with a gay laugh; “but at all events, there is no use in talking about the matter any more. We have got the girl, and must keep her; for I suppose your highness is too gallant to turn her loose in these woods, even if I were inclined to suffer it.”

His companion seemed, however, by no means satisfied, and rode sullenly on in silence, till they had quitted the forest at a point some eight miles distant from the spot at which Sir Edward Langdale and his party had entered it. At the distance of about a mile further where a pleasant little shady dell received the waters of the river which we have already mentioned, appeared a small hamlet, with a gothic church on one side of the road and two or three houses on the other; and here one of the party proposed

to stop for a few minutes and let the horses drink.

The light had not yet faded from the sky, and the clouds were still rosy with the sunset, so that when the gentleman in the blue scarf raised his eyes towards the slope which the road ascended passing between the houses and the church, he could see distinctly two carts drawn up across the highway, with some bundles of faggots and poles joining either end of this unexpected barricade to the houses on one side and the wall of the church on the other.

“Halloo! what is here?” he exclaimed; and after gazing for an instant, he added, turning sharply to his companion, “see what a scrape you have got us into! There are a number of fellows behind those carts, and more in the church-yard. They are well armed, too. Don’t you see the gleam?”

“Awkward enough,” replied the other,

“but I had nothing to do with it. Most likely some of the Prince’s men, come in pursuit of us.”

“I don’t know that,” replied the other, “I don’t think it. Some military man must be at the head of it, that is clear; but I think we shall find—Stay! who is this coming forward?”

As he spoke, a man, apparently light and young, leaped the church-yard wall, and advanced towards the party in the road, with a drawn sword in one hand, held loosely by the blade, and one of the large horse-pistols of the day in the other. He walked with an easy and deliberate air, as if he were merely taking a morning stroll, but still continued, to advance towards the man in the blue scarf. As soon as he had come within five or six paces, so that his features could be discerned the voice of Lucy Langdale was heard exclaiming—

"Oh, Master Bernard, help me, help me ! These men are dragging me away, Heaven knows whither."

"They will not drag you any further," replied Bernard Marsh, in a cool tone, and then added, turning to the leader of the party, "Sir, you are to set this young lady immediately free. There is no use of making any struggle about it, for I have three times your number on the road before you, and Sir Edward Langdale and his men are not half a mile behind you."

"And who the devil are you, Sir?" demanded the man in the blue scarf, taking off his mask ; "and how dare you stop a Prince of the blood in this manner?"

"I am the devil of nobody, Sir," answered the young man in the same calm tone, "but a gentleman of as good blood as any in the land. I know you, Monsieur le Duc de L—, and that you are what you state ; but as for

daring, I dare just as readily fire this pistol right into your face, as I dare fire it into the head of a spavined horse, when I find you engaged in such illegal and unworthy enterprises."

"May the devil seize you, Breteuil," said the Duke, turning to his companion, "I told you how all this would end."

"It is not ended yet," answered the other.

"No, gentlemen," said Bernard Marsh, "it is not; but, if you will take my advice you will end it as soon as possible, for I hear Sir Edward's horses coming over the hill; and if he arrive, I shall have no power to make you the proposal I now do out of consideration for some of the members of the noble Duke's family, who have shown me kindness on former occasions. It is this, that you instantly put the young lady's bridle in my hand, and ride on as fast as you can go.

I will order the barricade to be opened before you, and hope to have sufficient influence with Sir Edward, to induce him not to pursue you. Only take my counsel, and the next time you feel inclined to carry off a young lady, who, I presume, is an heiress, do not lead her within two miles of her father's house. If you measure a bow and a string, you will always find the string the shortest."

"Ventre saint gris!" exclaimed the man who had been called Breteuil, "you are a mighty cool personage. I should like to know your name."

"Nonsense, nonsense!" cried the Duke, hearing the sound of horses' feet coming rapidly along the road, "give the young lady up to him instantly, and come on. We have your word that we shall pass safe, Sir?"

"You have, if you make haste," replied Bernard Marsh, "but if you wrangle till Sir

Edward Langdale comes up, I imagine you will be anything but safe; and the road is not very long from here to the Bastille."

As he spoke, he passed the two leaders, and laid his hand on Lucy's bridle rein, adding, "be not afraid, my dear young lady. This will all pass quietly; these gentlemen have no choice."

"Come on with us, Sir, and tell the men to open the carts," said one of the men who had been riding by Lucy's side, "I would willingly teach you a lesson that you would not easily forget, stripling."

"Perhaps you might receive one," replied Bernard Marsh, with a laugh, "at all events I shall be glad to give you instruction whenever you want it;" and then he added in a stern tone, as the man seemed inclined to linger; "ride on this instant, Sir, or worse will come of it."

The whole party then advanced along the

road, Bernard following, calmly leading Lucy's horse, and speaking to her in quiet and kindly tones. At the barricade, the Duke de L—— and his companions saw that they had been in a much more perilous condition than they imagined; for full thirty men, all carrying fire-arms, were assembled either behind the carts or in the church-yard, and others were seen running down the road at full speed, as men too late at a general meeting. One word from Bernard Marsh, however, caused a part of the barrier to be removed; but as the men behind still stood shoulder to shoulder he added, in a voice of command,

“Let these gentlemen pass; the young lady is here, quite safe. Fall back, my men! I have promised them security.”

He was obeyed at once; but evidently with reluctance, and one of the men ventured to say,

"Ah, Master Bernard, if we might but have given them one volley!"

"Would you kill your young lady, Jaques?" answered the other, reproachfully.

"You are right, Sir, you are right," replied the other, "some of us might have hit her in this dull light."

"Here comes your master," said Bernard Marsh, "those gentlemen have only got off in time," and making a sign to one of the men in the rear, he whispered a word to him, which seemed to have the effect of instantly sending away some five or six of the party.

"Ah, Master Bernard, how can I ever thank you?" said Lucy, laying her hand upon his as it rested on the pommel of her saddle.

"No thanks are needed, dear young lady," he answered. "It only required some

sharp riding, and some knowledge of the roads. I saw these men at the beginning separate you further and further from your mother, and soon divined that they had some object. My horse was ready behind the trees, and, once on his back, no horse in all France could catch me before I reached the château. I easily slipped away in the confusion, gathered some of the servants and tenants together, left word for the rest to follow, and came on here, where I knew these people must pass if they took the way to Paris, as I had reason to believe they would."

"But how have you such a knowledge of the roads?" said Lucy: "you never quit the park."

Bernard did not give her a direct answer, but said in a gay tone,

"Here comes your father. You must explain all to him, or he may think I

have been trying to run away with you myself."

As he spoke, Sir Edward Langdale, with several servants, came up at full speed; and in a moment Lucy was off her horse and in his arms.

"Oh, father," she cried, "I thought I should never see you or my mother again; and I should not, if it had not been for the courage and kindness of Master Bernard, who cut off those wretched men here—"

"I know, dear girl," said Sir Edward. "Old Robin told me the message he left for me, and I easily conceived his plan, which I must say," he added, somewhat dropping his voice, "was more that of a general than that of a tutor."

"There is a gentleman among them, Sir Edward," said Bernard, "who wants a lesson, which I must give him. He is an old acquaintance of mine, and I am very

willing to oblige him, especially in the exercise of my proper functions. But I am very glad Mademoiselle Lucy has been saved a longer ride. She has had a longer one than she counted upon. Had we not better return to the château, and send these good people back?"

The proposal was readily agreed to; Master Bernard's fine horse was soon brought forth from the church-yard; the peasantry and the servants took their way homeward; and the usual libations of good wine were poured forth to celebrate the little triumph.

We must pass over the joy of Lady Langdale and the younger children at the recovery of Lucy; but, of course, the evening was rather a happy one. Master Bernard, indeed, was about to retire almost immediately after he reached the château, with the same grave face he usually wore; but Sir Edward besought him to stay.

Lady Langdale playfully commanded him to do so, and Lucy exclaimed warmly, but timidly,

“Oh, pray stay, Master Bernard, and pass the evening with us. I shall hardly think myself safe if you are away.”

“You have much better protectors than I am, dear young lady,” replied Bernard Marsh, raising his look to the deep, dark eyes that were gazing upon him; “but what cavalier can refuse a lady’s commands?” and he bowed gracefully to Lady Langdale.

Two or three hours were spent, perhaps more pleasantly than any which had passed since Bernard’s arrival at Belaye. The events of the day were discussed with frankness, and even cheerfulness, though a certain degree of thoughtful care might be seen upon Lady Langdale’s face; and once she remarked,

"You say, Lucy, you heard Madame de Chevreuse's name mentioned. Will that woman never cease persecuting me?"

"I should think she had enough to occupy her in all the intrigues regarding her daughter's marriage," said Bernard Marsh, and in a gay tone he gave a slight sketch of all the wild, frivolous, but dangerous complications which were going on in the court of the capital of France. Sir Edward Langdale remained silent; the conversation soon turned into other channels; Bernard Marsh played upon the lute and sang a gayer song than he had given the party in the morning, and the evening ended with strange feelings in many hearts.

When Lady Langdale rose and left the room with her daughter and the younger children, Bernard Marsh was about to retire also; but Sir Edward stopped him, holding out his hand and saying,

“I owe you an inappreciable debt ; but it is not of this I want to speak, Master Bernard. You are not what you seem ;—yet far be it from me to intrude into your confidence. However, thus much I may say. These men who played us so foul a trick this evening, are evidently of the highest rank. You spoke of giving one of them a lesson. If I understand you right, you will need some one to accompany you ; and I hope you will ask no one but myself.”

“Oh, no, Sir Edward,” replied Master Bernard, “if the man falls in my way, I may chastise him ; but it is not worth my while or yours to risk our life in a pitiful quarrel with a miserable varlet. Your life, my dear sir, is most valuable to your King and to your country. Unhappily the time for serving your present King is past for the present. It may come again—if not for him, for his successor ; for I will own I have great fears.

Reserve yourself for that time, Sir ; and when it does come, count upon me as one of your most devoted followers. At present, neither of us can do anything."

He spoke in the tone of a Prince ; and quietly pressing Sir Edward's hand, he left the room.

CHAPTER V.

SIR Edward Langdale kept up his habit of early rising—and as he dressed himself on the morning after the little adventure of the Table de Pierre, he called to mind various circumstances which had occurred during the preceding evening, and resolved to propound several questions to Master Bernard Marsh which he had hitherto neglected to ask. The principal of these was, why that young gentleman had suffered the men who attempted to carry off Lucy, to depart in peace,

when he had them in reality completely in his power. That there was some good reason for this conduct he did not doubt, but he wished for a full explanation; and, indeed, his curiosity had been so much excited by some points in the young gentleman's conduct, that he hardly felt inclined to let mere courtesy restrain him any longer from inquiring into the real character of his guest.

But if Sir Edward rose early, there was another who had risen earlier. Master Bernard Marsh was gone. A note was put into Sir Edward's hand merely informing him that business of urgent importance required Master Marsh's absence for a few days, but that he would return as soon as possible. The latter assurance was confirmed by the fact that the youth's saddle-bags, and much of his little store of apparel had been left in his room; and Sir Edward was obliged

to wait in ignorance of much that had taken place.

In the meantime, however, it may be as well to follow the course of Master Bernard Marsh after he left the gates of the château about break of day. At first he rode alone, quietly patting the neck of his fine charger, and talking to him as if the animal could understand and answer; but before he had gone a mile beyond the little hamlet where the barricade had been erected, two men on horseback rode up and joined him.

"Well, Archibald," said the young gentleman, returning their respectful salutation, "have you gained any news?"

"They certainly went towards Paris, Sir," replied the man, "but I think you will most probably find them somewhere about Gien or Montargis; for they say there is likely to be a battle soon in that quarter; and of course they will be there."

“I don’t know that,” replied Master Bernard, dryly ; and rode on upon the road toward Paris, without further conversation. The two men followed at a quick but not very hasty pace, and stopped for a few minutes to refresh the horses or to make some inquiries at a roadside inn. The result of these inquiries seemed a change of purpose ; for when still some twenty miles distant from Paris, the young gentleman and his two companions took a road to the right, which led into that fine country now known as the department of the Seine and Loire. On this they rode forward, with but one halt, till night-fall, and then quartered themselves at a small inn in the suburbs of the little town of Jargeau ; where the wine is remarkably good, if the reader likes to try it. There seemed to be no other travellers in the tavern ; and the host and hostess were delighted at the unexpected arrival of three

well-looking cavaliers. They had hardly more time, however, than to stable their horses, and the host could not even finish the description he was giving to Master Bernard of the position and movements of the Royal Army and the troops of the Fronde, when a party of six was added to the number. They were all stout, gay-looking men, mounted on very tolerable horses, and well armed—too well armed indeed, for any but troublous times and dangerous circumstances. The first who dismounted was a man not very tall but powerful in frame, and with the eye of an eagle. He sauntered up deliberately to the side of another personage much better dressed than himself, who seemed to be the leader of the party, and held his stirrup while he dismounted.

"See the horses fed, Gaillard," said the latter.

"I beg your lordship's pardon," said the

man whom he called Gaillard, "but that is not my place, Monsieur Goulard. That belongs to the grooms. I'll dress your hair, or put on your shirt for you; but I don't tend horses. I'll have nothing to do with any flesh but human flesh, though I am going to have an omelet to-night; and that I'll cook with my own hands, for sure I am that the people of this place cannot cook one fit for the grinders of a gentleman's gentleman."

"Well you are a saucy varlet," said the hostess, who had come out. "I have cooked for better men than you, many a time; and they all say my omelets are the best in the world."

"I'll cook one against you this night," said the valet, snapping his fingers, "for a thousand—that is to say, for fifty sous."

"Oh, an omelet, an omelet, we will all

partake of the omelets!" cried the other cavaliers, "get ready, Gaillard."

"I'll bet upon Gaillard," cried one.

"I'll back the hostess," cried another.

"Ten crowns upon the hostess," said Monsieur Goulard.

"I wonder where the devil he is going to get them," muttered Gaillard. "Well, to the kitchen, to the kitchen! Come, gentlemen, all, and witness this single combat and my triumph. I will even give Madam Marzot her husband, mine host, into the bargain to help her, and will beat her still by two turns and a half. Invite the strangers, I pray; for this is going to be as glorious a day as that of Rocroi;" and pulling off his pourpoint, he walked straight into the kitchen of the inn, calling aloud for frying pans.

The rest followed; Bernard Marsh with his usual grave demeanour, and the rest

laughing and talking, and making bets upon the valet and the hostess.

Now the kitchen of a French country inn in those days was something peculiar. It was a large room, nearly thirty feet square, with a gigantic hearth and fire-place on one side, and a bench running round three sides of the chimneys on which some ten or twelve persons could seat themselves without being roasted, although the *buche de Noel* itself—that is to say three quarters of a beech, tree—was burning on the hearth. On the other side of the room ran along a large table for the service of the guests; and just opposite was a kitchen dresser of thick wood, clean and as white as snow; having behind it a rack not unlike a manger furnished with rows of pots and pans, plates and dishes, sufficient, one would have thought, for the culinary establishment of a prince. From the ceiling, which was low, depended a wooden

instrument much in the form of a harrow, made of good stout bars crossing each other ; and through the interstices were seen a mighty store of various comestibles, hams, tongues, uncooked chickens, a dozen different sorts of boudins, besides long strings of onions, bunches of pot herbs, some hares, and an immensely large ancient goose, very fat but apparently very tough.

The guests scattered themselves about in different groups, talking to each other in low but apparently merry tones, while Maître Gaillard and the hostess bustled about seeking implements for the ensuing struggle. A couple of fat rosy maids came to the assistance of their mistress, and a large basket of beautiful and fresh looking eggs was produced, Madame Marzot at first seeming all confidence and even indignation, at being defied on her own field of battle. But she was resolved evidently to have every thing

in order for the strife; and she was so long puffing up the fire, selecting the eggs, greasing the frying pans, and chopping the fine herbs, that some of the party began to jeer her, declaring that she was shrinking from the combat.

In the meantime, a quiet and almost whispered conversation had commenced between Monsieur Goulard and our young friend Bernard Marsh, of which the rest of the party heard little, except the words, "I thought so, it was at Sedan"—"yes, just before the exchange"—"of course you are upon honor"—"you cannot doubt it."

"Good Heaven," cried the hostess almost in a scream, "the man is going to put wine in the omelet!"

"Wine," exclaimed Gaillard, putting down the bottle which he held in his hand, "I thought it was oil."

"And that is just as bad," cried Madame

Marzot, "when you have good fresh butter there close at hand."

"I never fry my omelets except in oil," said Gaillard, in a magnificent tone.

"Fiddle!" cried the hostess; "there take the bowl and beat up the eggs, man. I declare I don't think you know anything about it. Why you will poison the omelet with the fine herbs you have put in, a peck at least. It will be as green as grass."

"You mistake," said Gaillard solemnly, "and herein you show your ignorance of the great art and mystery of cooking. I want to make an omelet sufficient for the whole company, and after the first agglomeration of the eggs, by means of the fork, there should be ten more put in much less percussed, in order to give solidity and succulence to the whole."

This was a complete poser for poor

Madame Marzot, who had never heard such fine words in her life before; and she walked about muttering something in regard to sucking eggs, in order to make an omelet of them, adding from time to time in a low voice that she believed the man was mad.

At length, however, the great moment of trial arrived, the eggs were beaten up, poured into the frying-pans, and the two adversaries advanced toward the great wide fire-place, which was now blazing famously. Gaillard at the right end, Madame Marzot on the left. The latter, with well taught skill and dexterity, fried her omelet for a minute lightly, and retired a step or two to give it that firmer and more delicate toss, which doubles the omelet much into the form of a cocked hat, and leaves it ready for the hungry guest.

All had gathered around the fire-place, and were watching the proceedings of Monsieur Gaillard with a funny and somewhat doubtful

expression of countenance. It seemed to most of them that he was frying the omelet a great deal too much. It hissed and frizzled and sent up great clouds of ill-savoured smoke; but at length he lifted the pan from the fire, and with an arm that would knock down an ox, tossed his conglomerate up into the air.

Oh, energy ill-applied! Oh, strength misused! The omelet rushed up to the ceiling, struck against it with a great squelch, and rebounded into the midst of the fire.

"Accursed be all these low ceilings!" exclaimed Maître Gaillard.

"The ceiling did not come to you, man," said Madame Marzot.

But at that moment the kitchen door opened, and followed by several others in military guise, there entered a tall, well-looking man, fully armed with sword and dagger, breastplate and back-piece. Goulard and his

companions drew back from the fire, Gaillard looked over his shoulder at the new comer, with one tremendous swing, sent the frying pan, grease and all, into the midst of the flame; and advancing towards the door, took the stranger in his arms, exclaiming:

“Ah, Monsieur de Marsin, welcome welcome! All must be right now, as I see you here.”

“All is safe, your Royal Highness,” said De Marsin, kissing his hand; “I have three companies with me at the door, which will cut the way through for you if the devil himself and all his troops stood in the way; but I must say this is the maddest enterprise that ever your Highness undertook—to march a hundred and fifty leagues through an enemy’s country and across hostile armies, when Jules Mazarin would have given a million of crowns for your head.”

"I may get his cheaper before I have done," answered Maître Gaillard, with a laugh, and then turning to Bernard Marsh, he took him by the hand, saying—"You must excuse me, Sir, for not noticing you before. I have had too many proofs of your discretion not to know that though you might recognize me, you would not either by word or sign betray me."

Bernard Marsh bowed low, saying, "The Prince de Condé, once seen is never to be forgotten. Indeed it was some business with your Highness which brought me hither; for although you may think it strange notwithstanding all the precautions you have taken, your departure from the South is already well known both to your friends and enemies in the North."

"All the more lucky that I escaped them both," replied Condé, "for friends would have been as inconvenient to me

as enemies. But come with me to the camp: as soon as I have spoken a few words to Monsieur de Marsin, we will speak of your business there, and I may be able to give you some little entertainment—a ball or a *feu de joie*; or something of that kind.”

Bernard Marsh bowed and drew back: but the Prince retired with Monsieur de Marsin into a little bed-room at the side of the kitchen, and remained there in earnest conversation for nearly half an hour. In the meantime the good hostess, all in a flutter at the idea of having tossed omelets with the greatest warrior of the age, was doing her best to prepare something for her princely guest; but Condé's first words were when he returned, “To horse, gentlemen, to horse! If you need a hot supper you shall have it farther on,”

The journey to the head-quarters of the

Prince's army was speedily performed, he and De Marsin riding first, and the rest following; but Bernard Marsh found no opportunity of obtaining any private conversation with Condé either on the road, or for three days after their first halt. The moment they arrived at De Marsin's quarters, the Prince threw himself upon a bed, fully dressed, and in a few moments was sound asleep. The next morning by break of day, the army of the Prince was on its way to Montargis. Then followed the brief siege of that town, where Condé, in person, approaching the gates with a trumpeter by his side, summoned the garrison to surrender within an hour; and with his watch in his hand, waited till the keys were delivered up. It is true that he promised to punish resistance by hanging every citizen at his own gate, and the citizens believed that he might very probably

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keep his word. Thus their hesitation was not very long. The citadel, which contained vast stores of arms and ammunition, was taken with the same facility, though Condé in his bantering tone, was afterwards accustomed to call it "the miracle of Jericho." It is well known, indeed, that one of the towers of the castle fell while the trumpets were blowing the summons, and the garrison was forced to surrender, though they had previously made every preparation for a vigorous defence.

Thus passed the time, however, during three or four days after the meeting of Bernard Marsh and the Prince, before any private interview could be obtained.

CHAPTER VI.

It was a very dark night; the moon had set; clouds covered the stars; a deep forest, clothing some hilly ground to the west, shut out the last faint rays which still lingered in that quarter; and a party of some ten or fifteen gentlemen, followed by a small body of troopers, might have found some difficulty in discovering their way, had not a man on a spirited little ass guided them with perfect certainty, not alone along the

high road, but also upon the numerous by-paths which led to various valleys in the neighbourhood.

"Mind! the highest knoll, Jacques Bonhomme!" said the Prince de Condé, who was at the head of the party, addressing the man on the donkey; "I must see if it be possible—but we shall soon have light enough. So, my good friend," he continued, turning to Bernard Marsh, who was riding near his side, "you will not even don a cuirass, though I warn you we are going to have sharp work."

"Your Highness knows I must not engage in these hostilities," replied the young gentleman, "I come but to look on."

"What, just as an amateur?" said Condé, laughing. "Well, if you get shot, remember 'tis not my fault; but it is my veritable belief that old Hocquincourt is asleep, or he must have found out some of our

parties by this time. We will find means to make him. Spur on your *bourique*, old man."

The guide did as he was commanded, and made the best of his way forward till he reached the top of a little monticule, which he declared to be the highest ground within ten miles of Bleneau.

There the whole party paused, and gazed over the scene around. A wide undulating plain stretched, from the belt of forest I have mentioned, for many miles towards the south and east; and between the wood itself and the spot where Condé's party were congregated, extended some open fields over a gentle slope for the distance of about three miles. Some dark patches rising up here and there, with occasionally the faint outline of a church, indicated the position of various villages; but the night continued very dark, and the only object which was

at all distinctly seen, was a small river that ran glistening along in the plain below.

Condé sat perfectly still, with his eyes fixed upon the stream, for some five minutes, when a dark mass seemed to cross the river, obscuring its gleam at one particular spot for somewhat less than a quarter of an hour.

"Marsin is over," said the Prince at length; "and now, gentlemen, I think we may begin the work. Fire a carbine, and blow a trumpet!"

The next moment, the discharge of a gun was heard, and then the shrill blast of a trumpet; and in a few seconds a loud and confused noise of drums, cymbals and trumpets was heard from a spot some three hundred yards distant. The same sounds were then taken up on the right, then on the left, in some eight or ten places, mingled

with the roar of two or three pieces of artillery, together with the scattered firing of small arms, and a hideous hum of human voices. Then suddenly a bright blaze broke forth upon the left, showing a village all in flames, with the church tower plainly distinguishable in the midst. Another and another hamlet was fired, and, in an amazingly short space of time, the whole plain was illuminated almost as brightly as if the sun shone upon it; and confused masses of fugitives were seen rushing in terror and disarray from the various villages, where the royal army had been quartered, towards the head of a causeway across some marshy land, while the small but compact bands of Condé's horsemen pursued the flying, and cut them down without mercy.

"Ah! Monsieur d'Hocquincourt," said Condé, with a laugh, as he gazed upon

the fearful but brilliant scene; "by this time I think you have not a quarter left. This will teach you to keep your men closer together, I think. And now, gentlemen, that we can see our way, we had better have a little share in this affair ourselves. They seem to be making some resistance there at the *tête de chaussée*; let us ride down and take them in the flank. They will soon be dispersed, for I will swear they are well frightened."

Thus saying he put his horse into a quick trot, and, followed by the other gentlemen and his small body of troopers, rode down the hill towards a spot at the end of the causeway, where a desultory firing of musketry was going on, as if Marshal d'Hocquincourt was endeavouring to rally his dispersed army at that point. His men were soon scattered again by the fierce charge of the Prince de Condé; and the loss would

have been much greater on the royalist side had not Turenne come up and repaired in some degree the indiscretion of Hocquincourt in spreading his quarters too far apart, by covering the retreat of the royal forces to Gien.

During the whole of these scenes, Bernard Marsh rode close to the Prince, unarmed even with defensive armour, such as the habits of those times required—foolish and ridiculous habits, which have not been wholly banished in our day, although every one knows that since the introduction of fire-arms, steel is no defence, and only an encumbrance. Still we say young Bernard Marsh went perfectly unarmed, for he had left his sword and even his pistols behind; and he rode gayly and carelessly, too, avoiding no exposure, and talking as coolly to his great and daring companion as if he had been seated with him at the dinner-board.

Turenne, however, advanced, as I have shown, with a superior force, and planting his cannon so as to sweep the causeway, saved the remnant of the royal army. But Condé had already gained all that he wished or expected. All the advanced posts of the enemy had been taken, and the way to Paris was open. The science of war was very differently understood and practised in those days. A great defeat did not imply absolute destruction to one side or success to the other; and, though God knows the boldness of military genius was often enough displayed, the resources of military science were always ready to fall back upon.

Day was breaking brightly; the trumpets were sounding the recall; and the Prince, with Gourville, Bernard Marsh, and one or two others took their way to Bleneau, the small town where Hocquincourt had slept the night before. It was a dull morning,

with one of those misty drizzles in the air which are attributed especially to the dear old land of cakes, but which from time to time infest every country, from the north pole to nether Ind. But Bernard Marsh kept up easily with the Prince, though they rode fast, and found an opportunity of saying,

“I am afraid your Highness has forgotten that I have a little business with you?”

“Ay, ay; but I have had my hands quite full, my good friend. What is it? Let me hear. I hope to Heaven it is not to ask me to pay an old debt; for I think, after this night’s work, that is the only thing I cannot do.”

“Certainly not that,” said Bernard; “for I am afraid that I have no claim upon your Highness, or doubtless you would find means to settle that matter also. But, yesterday morning, the Duc de L——, the Marquis de

Breteuil, and Monsieur de Villeneuve, joined your camp at Montargis. These three gentlemen and a small party of their retainers, some days ago, carried off against her will a young lady, to whose father I am under obligations, and were riding away with her, when I stopped them. The Duke, as of your own blood, is, of course, too high for me to meddle with; and, besides," he added, with a smile, "I do not set myself up to be the champion of fair ladies, so that Monsieur de Breteuil also may pass unnoticed. But Monsieur de Villeneuve used some unpleasant language towards me on that occasion; and I promised to give him a lesson which I have now come here to administer. I did not choose to do so, however, without your Highness's permission."

"You will kill the poor devil," said Condé;
"and I shall lose a good soldier."

"No, I will not," replied Bernard Marsh,

he is a good swordsman, I believe; and I only want to instruct him a little in courtesy and politeness."

"A rough lesson, I am afraid, my good friend," replied Condé; "but I cannot part with Villeneuve. He is one of my best followers. If I want a man to run his head against a post, I send for Villeneuve. If I want any one to be taken prisoner, and give the enemy any wrong information, I send for Villeneuve. Put him at the head as a cornet of horse, and he is sure to get into some scrape before the day is over, thinking all the time that he is one of the most stratagetic and skilful captains that ever lived. You must not deprive me of Villeneuve, my good friend."

"Only for a week or so, until he is better," replied Bernard Marsh.

"Till he is better? No, no," said the Prince, "let me try to settle the affair—an

apology in writing to the young lady. That will do."

"Hardly satisfactory to me, but I submit to your Highness's pleasure," replied Bernard Marsh; "I doubt, however, that you will get Monsieur de Villeneuve to make the apology; and I only trust you will expedite the affair; for I hear that the plague has broken out behind us, and I am anxious to return."

"In order to catch it?" asked Condé with a laugh.

"I was brought up in the midst of it," replied the young gentleman, "when the King was at Oxford, and we were in the field. I got quite accustomed to the ugly creature; and as it never did me any harm, I lost all fear of it. But I have to take care of some friends who do not know its ways so well as I do."

Thus they rode on, conversing on various

subjects, till they reached Montargis, when the Prince de Condé told his young companion to wait for him at his quarters, and sent a servant to summon Monsieur de Villeneuve to his presence.

Some ten minutes after, the young gentleman who had been placed at Lucy's side when she was carried off from the *table de Pierre*, entered the Prince's room at the castle, with that sort of gay, reckless air, which was very much affected by the young French nobility of that day.

"Be seated, Monsieur de Villeneuve," said the Prince, "I have a somewhat unpleasant message for you, from a young English gentleman."

"Ah!" exclaimed Villeneuve, in a supercilious tone, "I do not know any English, your Highness. I do not like the animal, and do not cultivate it."

"This young gentleman seems inclined to

force you to know him," replied the Prince, gravely, "and the matter must be treated more seriously, Monsieur de Villeneuve."

"Assuredly, my lord," answered the other, with a sneering smile still upon his lip. "But what may this respectable gentleman's name be?"

Condé paused thoughtfully for a moment; and perhaps the reader may have remarked—as many of the officers and attendants had done—that in conversation, the Prince never gave Bernard Marsh any name at all, but merely called him "my good friend," or "my good sir." At length he answered,

"His name, Sir, does not matter; and, to say the truth, I do not exactly know what he chooses to be called—"

"By my faith, your Highness, I think his name does matter," answered Villeneuve, boldly. "I do not know that I shall con-

descend to fight a man whose name I do not know—for that I suppose is the purport of this message.”

Condé’s face flushed, and he answered sharply,

“Condescend! It is he who condescends. He is your superior, Sir, in all things.”

“He may not be my superior in the use of the sword,” answered the young nobleman.

But Condé burst into a loud laugh.

“He is without exception the best swordsman in Europe,” he said; “I have seen him disarm Martini, the famous Italian fencer, at the third pass.”

Villeneuve was silent; but the Prince’s countenance changed; his brow grew stern and dark, his lip compressed, and all traces of his contemptuous merriment died away.

“You have been bold, Sir,” he said, “to talk of condescending towards a gentleman

from whom I give you a message. With him you shall deal as he thinks fit; but I now speak on my own part; you shall write a full and ample apology to the young lady whom you carried off in company with Monsieur De Breteuil, or—”

Villeneuve was a bold, and even rash man, and although he saw the unmistakable signs of haughty anger on the Prince's face, and knew what that anger implied in the case of Condé, he could not refrain from asking,

“Or what? your Highness.”

“Or you quit my camp instantly,” said Condé, in a loud, stern voice; “and from that moment, you are no longer my friend, but my enemy.”

Villeneuve rose from his seat and stood before the Prince, evidently much agitated. He hesitated in silence for several moments, and then said, in a low and respectful tone,

"I cannot quit your Highness! Had the consequence been anything but that, I would rather have cut off my hand, than write what you require. As it is, I go to obey."

"You do right, Sir," said Condé, whose anger was but little abated. "Mind that the apology be full and explicit."

Villeneuve bowed, and withdrew. Condé sat and knocked one heavy boot against the other, apparently in not a very placable mood for two or three minutes, and then saying, "It is time I should have some sleep," called a valet from the ante-room, took off his cuirass, divested himself of his other arms, and threw himself down on the bed, which was then to be found in almost every chamber of a French house, giving orders that he should not be disturbed for two hours.

At the end of that time, he arose

without being called—conversed for a few minutes with Gourville, and some other gentlemen who had been waiting for him, received a letter which he read and put into his pocket, and then sauntered quietly forth to the Barbican Tower of the old castle, which lay at some distance from his quarters. Without any announcement he walked in, but paused for a minute or two on the stair, hearing a very beautiful voice singing.

“He is an extraordinary man,” said Condé to himself; and then finishing the ascent, he entered the chamber of Bernard Marsh, and put the letter he had received into his hands.

“That is full and sufficient,” he said; “now give me your word, my good friend, that you will cease your pursuit of the quarrel.”

Bernard Marsh read the paper which

the envelope contained, and then folded it up again saying :

“It makes no apology to me, your Highness, for the injurious words he used ; but my private satisfaction I of course submit to your pleasure. I shall leave the camp to-morrow morning early ; for if this gentleman and myself meet, we are not likely to part quite peacefully.”

“Well, if you must go, do so,” replied the Prince, in his usual bluff tone ; “but I do not see why all this business should not be composed between you and Monsieur de Villeneuve, or why you should not remain here and attach yourself to the party of the princes. This land is very nearly equally divided ; and *we* must be successful in the end ; for we are fighting for the inalienable rights of Frenchmen, against an Italian favourite supported by a foreign woman.

Bernard Marsh shook his head.

"Why not, why not?" cried Condé, impetuously.

"Your King became of age in August last," answered Bernard Marsh; "high treason, your Highness, high treason!"

The Prince looked down somewhat gloomily, and then replied:

"There is something more, my good friend; we have known all about high treason a long time ago; but what makes you think we shall not be successful? You have something more in your mind?"

"Much," replied Bernard Marsh, "but I may speak too plainly, and your Highness is not accustomed to hearing plain truth quietly."

"Go on, go on," said Condé, nodding his head; "I will be as quiet as a dove, and only peck your hands a little if you hold my wings too tight."

"Well, then," answered the young man, "you have to recollect that, first, you have against you an Italian fox, with wit a great deal keener than the sword which hangs by your side; and next, you have against you a French wolf, with not less cunning, and more rancour."

"You mean Gondi," said Condé. But Bernard Marsh went on without directly replying.

"Then, again, if I may use what may seem an anomaly, you have a weak but powerful friend. Weak for all good purposes, powerful for all bad ones; clothed by his position with immense authority, incapable by character of using it in a straightforward direction—a prince whose friends are not pioneers, but follow rather than go before him, blotting out the false steps he has taken, rather than opening paths to success, and bearing the axe on their necks, instead of in their hands."

“Gaston! Gaston!” said Condé, greatly moved; “the picture is too true—it cannot be mistaken!”

“Moreover, there is an enraged lady,” continued Bernard, “who will not be easily appeased; but your own party is the worst defect of your Highness’s position.”

“What is the matter with our party?” cried Condé, starting up impatiently.

“That not one single member thereof has any principle of any kind,” replied Bernard Marsh, very gravely.

“Sacre bleu! nor has any party in England!” cried Condé.

“Your Highness will pardon me,” replied Bernard Marsh; “there is a great distinction. Wilfulness, vanity, and want of concert have ruined the majesty of England; but the royalist party has always had one bond of union—devoted loyalty. The rebels, or Parliamentarians, as they call them, were for

some time much divided ; but there is a bond of union which some of their leaders have not failed to discover and make serviceable—Fanaticism, my lord the Prince, and that is the most formidable agent that has ever moved men's passions in this world. Here I see but one feeling which is likely to be permanent—reverence for the royal authority. But I must not suffer you to remain under the belief that it is your chances of success alone which move me. I have received kindness, hospitality, friendship from all parties in a foreign land ; and it would not become me, I think, to draw my sword against that crown which long protected me, though in these troublesome times its favour has been, perhaps necessarily, withdrawn."

"I am not drawing my sword against the crown," cried the Prince, vehemently, "but against an Italian knave," and turning on his heel he left the room. Every step he

took, however, he became more and more grave, and felt, perhaps, that there was much truth in the hard words he had heard

CHAPTER VII.

BEFORE the sky was gray with dawn on the following morning, the horses of Bernard Marsh were saddled and at the door. The two servants who had accompanied him and were now prepared to depart with him, remarked nothing in his demeanour worth notice, and he whistled a few bars of an Italian air as he put his foot in the stirrup and swung himself into the saddle.

The streets of Montargis were empty of all persons but the little party itself, and one

man on foot, who walked on before them, looking over his shoulder from time to time, as if somewhat suspicious of the three men who followed.

Bernard Marsh rode very slowly, patting his horse's neck and talking to him, and when one of the men reminded him that they had a long way to go, the young gentleman merely replied :

“The more reason, then, to spare the horses at the beginning of the journey.”

The sun was just rising as they passed the gates ; but still the traveller on foot kept upon his way before them ; and they did not lose sight of him till they had ridden nearly a mile, when he seemed to turn into the wood, and disappeared. Just where he vanished, appeared the entrance of a little foot-path ; and at the corner a stone post, with half-effaced letters on two sides. After passing this stone some five or six yards, Bernard

Marsh drew in his rein, and sprang to the ground.

“Here, Ralph, take my horse,” he said, in an ordinary tone, “and ride forward to the first cross. They tell me it is about a quarter of a mile further on. I will rejoin you in a few minutes.”

The man took the bridle which his master held out to him, but both the servants looked at the young gentleman with some doubt; and he had to repeat mildly, “Go on, my good fellows, before they moved a step.

They did not venture to disobey, however; and Bernard Marsh turned down the little path into the wood. It was very narrow, and the boughs of the old trees crossing overhead, rendered the gray of the unconfirmed day all the more sombre. Bernard walked slowly, with a grave air, carelessly knocking off the heads of some of the forest plants that bordered the path, till at the end

of perhaps a couple of a hundred yards, the trees fell more apart, and a little meadow, not much larger than a cottage garden, opened out before him. It was a dank and gloomy looking place enough, edged on the side opposite to that on which Bernard entered, by a small brook covered with water-cresses, and was itself clothed quickly with long, dewy grass. It did not seem a very cheerful resting-place; but there, at the opposite side, on the bank of the brook, sat the stranger who had gone on before the young traveller from Montargis.

“Good morning, Monsieur de Villeneuve,” said Bernard Marsh; “we are both I believe a little before our time.”

“Better before than behind time,” answered Villeneuve in rather a rough tone: “it will soon be light enough. Where are your men? You agreed last night to come alone.” As he spoke he eyed the seemingly

slight form of Bernard Marsh from head to heel, gazing with a certain degree of contempt at his delicate hands, taper fingers and small feet, and murmuring to himself something very like, "Fight with a girl!"

"I have come alone, Monsieur de Villeneuve," replied Bernard Marsh; "my men are a quarter of a mile forward on the road by this time; but you will perceive that as I have to go some forty or fifty miles in this very direction, after settling with you this morning, it was economy of time and trouble to bring my servants part of the way with me—killing two birds with one stone you see, Monsieur de Villeneuve."

The figure was not a very palatable one; and Monsieur de Villeneuve exclaimed in an angry tone, "Sacré matin;"

He recovered himself in a moment, however, and said more placably, "there is light enough to see to measure our weapons at

all events; and as you are in a hurry we had better do so. There is my sword, what is the length of yours?"

"A little shorter, I believe," said Bernard Marsh, drawing the blade from the sheath; "but it is all the same to me."

"By the Lord you seem very confident, young man," exclaimed Villeneuve, beginning to have some doubts as to the conclusion of the affair in which he had engaged.

But Bernard Marsh answered nothing, merely laying his blade along that of his antagonist, which was nearly two inches longer.

"This is hardly fair to you, Sir," said Villeneuve frankly.

"Oh, quite fair," replied Bernard Marsh, thrusting his sword back into the sheath, and seating himself near the spot where the other had been sitting. "Two inches make a good deal of difference in some things, but not much in a sword, if a man knows how

to handle it. In five minutes we shall have plenty of light, I think. But let me say a word or two to you first;" and he pointed to a little molehill by his side, as if inviting the other to be seated.

Villeneuve sat down at once; for there is a certain sort of air and manner which, as it were, gives command; and Bernard Marsh possessed it entirely. "You will remember, Monsieur de Villeneuve," he said, "that this affair is not of my seeking. When you addressed me last night in the streets of Montargis, I told you I had promised his Highness the Prince to be satisfied with the arrangement he made, and that I was satisfied. You required something more, and therefore I have met you here at your request. All I wish is to impress this fully upon your memory."

"It is not forgotten," answered Villeneuve, in a somewhat sneering tone; "but you pro-

mised once to give me a lesson, and I cannot forego such an advantage; for of course I consider it as such."

"I think it may be so," replied Bernard Marsh, quite quietly; "and it may teach you two things: first that it is not always safe to carry off a young lady against her will; and secondly, that it is always dangerous to treat a stranger with contempt, because you think yourself a little the better man. The sun is getting up, Sir; and I have a long ride before me."

"God knows," said Villeneuve, "one of us, I take it, will not ride far to-day."

He spoke in a tone of much irritation; but Bernard Marsh merely replied, "We had better look over the ground, Sir; it seems to me to be in a very bad and slippery condition." Thus saying he rose and walked forward crossing the little meadow from north to east and east to west, looking down as he

did so, to see where soft places occurred in the spongy surface.

The sun by this time had completely risen above the horizon ; but yet the light was somewhat faint upon the meadow ; for the trees rose up tall on every side, shutting out completely the morning rays.

At length Bernard paused in the middle of the ground, threw off his hat and cloak, and drew his sword. "Now Monsieur de Ville-neuve," he said, "I am ready, whenever it may suit your pleasure," and at the same time he saluted him gracefully, according to the fashion of fencers in those times. Ville-neuve followed his adversary's example, but with less grace, and to tell the truth, with some misgivings.

"Stand on your guard, Sir," he exclaimed, as he saw Bernard Marsh holding his sword somewhat negligently at the end of the salute ; and he made a half pass at his breast,

merely to awaken the young Englishman from his indifferent sort of coolness. But his blade was instantly met by that of the young stranger, who by the slightest possible turn of the hand, directed it past his shoulder. Scarcely feeling it necessary to change his attitude, Bernard Marsh stood solely on the defensive for some moments, parrying every quick and eager thrust of his opponent with as much ease as if he had been at play, till Villeneuve quite out of breath, retreated two or three steps, still keeping a wary eye upon his antagonist.

“If you will excuse me, Monsieur de Villeneuve,” said Bernard Marsh, “you will have to change that style of fencing. You round your wrist too much, and very often expose your shoulder.”

“I don’t think it,” answered Villeneuve sharply, “touch it if you can,” and in the next instant his sword was again crossed with

that of the young Englishman. One lounge, two lounges, then succeeded with great vehemence, and then Villeneuve retreated with the blood flowing down from the shoulder to the tips of his fingers.

"Take your time, M^{onsieur} de Villeneuve," said Bernard Marsh, "I told you, you exposed your shoulder."

"Nothing but a scratch," growled Villeneuve; "are you a fencing master?"

"In this instance I think I am," said Bernard Marsh. "You have had lesson one, if you want lesson two, I am quite at your disposal, after you have taken a little repose. I stand here without moving, on my honour."

Perhaps this display of perfect calmness was more irritating to poor Villeneuve than an absolute insult; but he had, indeed, so far received a lesson; and, as he paused, gazing at his adversary, he determined to be more cautious in his next attack. De-

terminations are very fine things when we can execute them; but at the outset Villeneuve forgot his so far as to cross swords with Bernard Marsh before he had fully recovered breath. The young Englishman, however, did not seize the advantage, but parried the lunges of his adversary with a calm smile, without ever returning them, till at length a better directed thrust brought Villeneuve's point within a few inches of his young antagonist's chest. It did not even graze him, or touch his doublet, but it showed Bernard Marsh that it was time to put an end to the combat. In the next pass, Villeneuve received another but deeper and sharper wound in the shoulder, and in the next, his sword went flying in the air. Bernard Marsh quietly caught it by the hilt as it descended, and dropped the point of that, as well as of his own weapon.

"Monsieur de Villeneuve," he said, with his usual calm manner, "I have now kept my word with you, and I do not think, Sir, that you can expect me to stay here any longer. In giving you back your sword, I know you are too much a gentleman and man of honour to use it against myself, when I tell you that I have had enough of this affair."

"If you have had enough of it, I am sure I ought to have," said Villeneuve, in a better tempered tone than he had hitherto used; "I wish to heaven you would take my handkerchief out of my right hand pocket, and help me to tie up my arm, for this blood is dabbling me all over."

"With all my heart," answered Bernard Marsh. "The bleeding will weaken you, too, so I will do my best to stop it, though I am no good surgeon."

Thus saying, he took the wounded man's

handkerchief from his pocket, and aided him, to the best of his ability, to stop the bleeding, which was considerable.

"You would have that pass over the arm, Monsieur de Villeneuve," he said; "I could not help it."

"It is all my own stupid fault, from beginning to end," said Villeneuve; "well might the Prince tell me you are the best swordsman in Europe."

"No, no, not quite that," replied Bernard Marsh; "and you would be a good swordsman, too, if you would have a little more patience, and take some lessons from a good Italian master."

"Ah, patience, patience!" answered the other; "it is what I never had, Sir, in my life, and your being so *sacré* cool, made me all the more impatient."

"I come of a cool people," answered Bernard Marsh, with a smile, "and have .

seen enough in my short life to cool the hottest drop of blood in my body."

"Well, well," said Villeneuve, "let us shake hands before we part, and be friends when we meet again. I had better get home and have this wound properly dressed, for it is getting very stiff."

"Can you get home alone?" asked Bernard Marsh; "I had better send one of my men to go with you."

"No, no," replied the other, "I shall do very well. I am not a woman or a baby to faint at the loss of a little blood. Just put the mantle over my shoulder, that I may not have the boys running after me, and you walk with me to the end of the lane."

The lane, as we have before shown, was not very long; and when they came out upon the high road, Bernard Marsh's two men were not in sight; but Monsieur de Villeneuve

declared that he could get back into the town quite well, and parted with his late adversary as if he had been an old friend. It is wonderful how the *inevitable* changes our views and even our actions. We struggle and resist, and fight and scratch so long as we imagine there is the slightest chance of success ; but when we find that there is too strong a hand upon us, we console ourselves with the old aphorism that " what can't be cured must be endured," and, if we are not fools, endure it cheerfully.

Villeneuve's only thought, however, now was, how to get into the town and to his own room, without being seen ; and, as it was so early in the morning, he thought there was a good chance of his meeting no one but grooms and horse-boys. But he was destined to disappointment in this matter also. On the little esplanade before the castle, which he was forced to pass, he found the Prince de

Condé, the Duc de la Rochefoucault, Gourville, and several others. Sharp wits were soon upon him respecting his early walk and soiled cloak and hat; but the Prince himself at length demanded:

“Where have you been, Villeneuve, and what have you been doing?”

“Not very far, your Highness,” answered Villeneuve; “I have been taking a lesson in dancing, and it has been a pretty sharp one.”

As he spoke, standing very near the Prince, he partly drew back his cloak, and showed him his wounded arm. Condé laughed aloud, at once divining what had occurred; and Villeneuve gladly made his escape to his own apartments.

CHAPTER VIII.

BERNARD MARSH walked on till he found his horse and servants waiting for him at the spot appointed ; and then mounting, he proceeded on his way, taking no notice of the adventure in which he had been engaged. The men who had not been without their suspicions, soon satisfied themselves that their young master was not hurt, and that was enough for them. They were accustomed to curb their curiosity in regard to his affairs,

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and to obey without asking any questions.

The whole party rode on more quickly than it had done at an earlier hour ; but yet the horses were never put beyond a quiet trot ; and shortly after noon they came to a small inn where they waited for refreshments. The sky, which had been dull and misty in the morning, with that sort of equivocal haze which may either turn to heavy rain or give way to bright sunshine, had chosen the latter alternative, and a cool, fresh wind had rolled up the vapours of the dawn into large, white clouds which sailed slowly and gladly into space, looking like the genii thrones which we read of in Eastern tales. It was a beautiful day, in short such as any man might enjoy who had not sorrow or sickness upon his shoulders ; but Bernard Marsh remarked that both in the host and hostess, though civil and attentive, there was an air of uneasiness and

abstraction which is rarely seen in a French landlord. The good stout house girls bustled about as usual; but there was something evidently upon mine host's mind; and at length Bernard inquired frankly if he had met with any misfortune.

"Oh no, no, Sir," replied the man, with a shy look, "nothing more than ordinary. I had a cow die the other day."

"Lord! Mathew," exclaimed the hostess, who was in ear-shot, "how can you talk so? The truth is, Sir, the plague is coming a great deal too near us. It is very bad in the next village out beyond there. You had better go through it quick when you leave us, for the air of the place is poisoned."

"What is that large house or castle that I saw rising up in the distance," asked Bernard, without seeming at all alarmed at the report of the pestilence. "Is the village you speak of at the foot of the hill?"

had now assumed, proposing to spend the night at Minepoix, and hoping to reach that place before the rain came down. The storm began, however, when he was still three miles from Minepoix, but not as he had anticipated. Broad flashes of sheet lightning spread over the scene, with occasionally a vivid line cleaving the sky, but not a drop of rain fell till he and his party had nearly reached the foot of the hill. Then large drops began to follow, making broad spots upon the dusty necks of the horses, while the heavy, black clouds before them stretching down to the very horizon, promised a gush of water such as has seldom been seen since Noah completed the ark.

The road led apparently straight on, without turn or deviation on either side; and there could be no doubt that they were on the right way; but the only object that indicated a village was a solitary farm-house,

little village of Montmarie, where the signs of the pestilence became evident at their very first entrance ; houses shut up appeared ; sounds of wailing, and even shrieks were heard ; while here and there a man or woman might be seen rushing along with compressed lips and vacant eye, as if fleeing from some unseen terror. Yet the place was not without its merriment, for the sounds of a fiddle were heard ; and in the little Place before the pump, a whole group of young and old were dancing with frantic activity.

Bernard and his companions pushed their horses through the village as soon as possible, and were soon beyond its utmost limit ; but as they rode on, they remarked that the clouds were massing heavily over head, with every promise of a very heavy storm to conclude the day ; and the young gentleman continued the more rapid pace which he

had now assumed, proposing to spend the night at Mirepoix, and hoping to reach that place before the rain came down. The storm began, however, when he was still three miles from Mirepoix, but not as he had anticipated. Broad flashes of sheet lightning spread over the scene, with occasionally a vivid line cleaving the sky, but not a drop of rain fell till he and his party had nearly reached the foot of the hill. Then large drops began to follow, making broad spots upon the dusty necks of the horses, while the heavy, black clouds before them stretching down to the very horizon, promised a gush of water such as has seldom been seen since Noah completed the ark.

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which was found closely shut up, and no entrance to be obtained at either door or window. Some four or five hundred yards further was a *carrefour* where four roads divided, with a finger post, the indicatory arms of which had lately been repaired, so that it was easy to read on one of them the words, "To Montmarie four leagues, to Belaye eight leagues, to Mirepoix quarter of a league." There was no choice but Mirepoix. Montmarie was by no means a pleasant residence. Belaye was too far, considering the aspect of the sky and the drops already fallen; and Mirepoix, whatever accommodation it might afford, was too near to admit of hesitation. Bernard Marsh turned his horse upon that path at once, touched him gently with the heel and raised the bridle rein; and the good beast darted forward up the hill round which the road wound, as if he comprehended at once the

the manifold porticoes or colonnades, which they could see from the spot where they were. There was assuredly a light in one of the windows, and as they rode on another appeared in a different part of the building.

“We shall find some one at all events,” said Bernard Marsh, “some farmer probably put in to help the place to go to decay, to use these beautiful arabesques to build a new chimney, or carry away sculptured mullions and crockets for barn supports and grinding stones.”

About three hundred yards more brought them up to the esplanade or terrace, with its vases and statues; and Bernard Marsh pushing on, sprang to the ground, cast his rein on his horse's neck, and advanced to the great door, which was still in a very good state of preservation, with the large notched ring and iron rasper still hanging by their original chains. He did not trouble them, however,

shrub sent forth its branches, marking the eternal triumph of nature over art.

Bernard Marsh paused before the old gates, and looked up towards a house which, higher still upon the hill, loomed up in the semi-darkness in the immense proportion of one of the buildings of a former day.

"We must ride up at all events," he said. "There is a light in one of the windows, and they will never refuse one shelter on such a night as this. I had heard the place was quite deserted; but there must be somebody here. Open the gate if you can, Ralph; the rain will soon come down very heavily, and having but one doublet, God wot, I would feign keep it as dry as possible."

The man rode forward and obeyed, the gate was opened without difficulty; and the whole party rode in, and up towards the house, certain of finding some sort of shelter for themselves and their horses in one of

the manifold porticoes or colonnades, which they could see from the spot where they were. There was assuredly a light in one of the windows, and as they rode on another appeared in a different part of the building.

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but knocked hard with the hilt of his sword, when immediately a voice from within exclaimed, "Come in."

Bernard Marsh entered, and found a large and magnificent room but feebly lighted by a couple of wax candles, stuck in one of the fixed candelabras at the side of the mantelpiece; but that which surprised him the most, was to see before him, leaning on a marble table in the centre of the hall, no other than Sir Edward Langdale himself.

The knight's face lighted up when he saw his young guest; and he advanced and shook hands with him warmly.

"Ah, Master Bernard, Master Bernard," he said, "I fear you have been playing me a trick. Where have you been this last week?"

"I have been to Montargis, Sir," replied Bernard Marsh. "I had the good fortune to be present as a spectator at the combat at

Bleneau, and saw all Marshal d'Hocquincourt's quarters carried one after another by Prince de Condé in the most masterly manner."

"And is that all?" asked Sir Edward.

"Not altogether, Sir," replied Bernard Marsh, "I have a letter to deliver to you. It is addressed to Mademoiselle de Langdale; but it had better be given to her by her father."

As he spoke he drew forth the letter of apology written by Monsieur de Villeneuve, and handed it to Sir Edward, who read it twice over, and then put it into his pocket, saying,

"I will deliver it; but I am sorry, Bernard, you took this affair upon yourself. It would better have become me."

"Your pardon, Sir," replied Bernard Marsh, "I had little to do with the affair: his Highness, the Prince de Condé, handed me the letter."

"Now in honesty and truth, Bernard Marsh," said Sir Edward, "did you or did you not peril your life to obtain this apology?"

"No, Sir, I did not," replied Bernard Marsh, "I told the fact to the Prince de Condé, and he insisted upon the letter being written; but—" he paused and hesitated; and his cheek turned somewhat red; but then he added frankly, "I must not deceive you, Sir Edward, Monsieur de Villeneuve and myself had a little affair to settle together on account of some words he addressed to me. I promised to give him a lesson, which I have given him since that apology was written, and entirely independent of it."

"Have you killed him?" asked Sir Edward, in a very grave tone.

"Oh, no," replied Bernard Marsh, "I would not have killed him for the world. He seems to me a very good sort of a young man,

though impetuous. I would have let him off with one wound if he would have been content; but he would have a second. Neither was more than a scratch, however; and he will be quite well in a few days. Probably I might not have hurt him at all, if I had not been anxious to get back to Belaye, and I had no time to throw away upon long fencing matches."

"Doubtless you are surprised to find me here," said Sir Edward; "who directed you?"

"I had not the slightest idea you were here until I opened that door," replied Bernard Marsh; "I came here with two men who accompanied me, (and who are now, I fear, getting very wet without), solely to take shelter from this storm. Hark how it is pouring! Can they put up the horses anywhere, Sir Edward?"

"Assuredly," replied the knight, "there

are good stables at the back of the house, though somewhat dilapidated. Stay, I will come with you and give them directions."

The men soon received orders to go round to the large *écuries*, which were usually attached to every gentleman's house in France at that time, and then to seek out the kitchen, dry themselves, and obtain some refreshment.

"They will find plenty of hay in the stables," said Sir Edward; "as to oats, I am afraid there are none; for we had no time to bring them with us, and as I have not been here half an hour, we have not been able to get them from the farm."

"Then you came here in haste, Sir Edward," said Bernard, as they re-entered the hall.

Sir Edward shook his head very gravely.

"We came here in great haste, indeed,"

he said, in a sad tone. "The fact is, Bernard, the plague has made its appearance at Belaye, and it is a lucky thing that you stopped your course here. Two of our servants died this morning. They had been ill for some days, and the stupid old doctor would not own the truth till the men were dead. I had never seen the ugly monster before, and could not judge of the symptoms."

"I have seen it many a time," replied Bernard Marsh, "and have nursed more than one man through it. I suppose then you have brought over Lady Langdale and your family?"

"They are all up stairs," replied Sir Edward, "seeking somewhere to pass the night; for the house is, as you may see by this hall, well nigh if not altogether unfurnished, but the little we have was brought over with us on pack-horses. The

fact is, this estate I hold in right with my wife. Belaye was left us by a dear friend, now dead. To keep up this château is too much for our means, as it had been for those of my predecessor; he let it go greatly to decay before his death. During Lucette's minority it suffered still more. Since then I have proposed often to have it repaired, but the troubles of these sad times, and the necessity of contributing everything I could possibly spare to the support of the King's cause, have prevented me from fulfilling my intentions."

He paused and fell into thought. A look of deep gloom came over his countenance. That look was explained a moment after.

"Good God! Bernard," he said, "I trust none of the children can have caught this dreadful disease."

"I trust not, Sir Edward," replied Ber-

nard Marsh; "but I have been told it more frequently attacks grown people, and those of the most robust constitutions. They are all well at present, are they not?"

"Quite well, quite well," replied Sir Edward, "but hush, here comes Lady Langdale."

The next moment Lucette entered the room with that calm and cheerful air which she had never lost amidst all the vicissitudes which had attended her early life. Her surprise at seeing Bernard Marsh was very great; but she was glad to see him, for he had won greatly her regard during the last month, and she thought that his society would be a comfort and support to her husband, whom she had never seen give way to apprehension before. Lucy and the three boys were speedily added to the party; and all the little arrangements they had made for

rendering themselves comfortable during the night were told in gay and jesting tones. Lady Langdale, it is true, puzzled herself a little as to where they could put Master Bernard; but when he discovered what the difficulty was, he laughed, pointing to the floor, and saying,

“On that floor, dear lady. I have lain as hard many a night.”

“No, no,” said one of the boys, who was clinging to Bernard, “let him have my bed. I can sleep in a chair.”

All the young people were evidently delighted to have him back among them; and Lucy, with her dark eyes full of light, and a slight blush flushing on her cheek, thanked him more fully than she had previously done for delivering her from the people who had carried her away.

“You will have to thank him still further, Lucy,” said her father, “for he has somehow

contrived to extract this written apology from the Marquis de Villeneuve ;” and he handed her the paper. Lucy read it ; and, while her mother took it from her hand to do the same, and the boys crowded around to see, the poor girl, with a pale cheek, and a somewhat hesitating manner, looked anxiously at the young gentleman, saying, “I hope, Master Bernard, it was not by—any—violence you forced him to write that ?”

“Oh, dear, no,” replied Bernard ; “I merely mentioned the facts to the Prince de Condé, and he insisted upon the apology being made. Villeneuve is an officer of his, and was obliged to comply.”

“I am very happy,” replied Lucy, “but I would not for the world have you risk anything for me. It is sad enough that men must peril their lives so often for their King and country, without having to do so for every little quarrel.”

Sir Edward Langdale smiled and looked meaningly at Bernard Marsh, saying,

“ I am afraid, Lucy, you would not do for a soldier’s wife.”

“ Oh, yes, she would, Edward,” said Lady Langdale, “ where honour or necessity called for it, Lucy would not attempt to keep any one she loved from obeying the summons. She is your own daughter, Edward, and can be as firm as you are when need requires it.”

The mother’s confidence in her child’s character had soon to be sadly verified. That evening passed calmly, perhaps even cheerfully. The next day rose bright and smiling, and the whole family, if they could not forget the proximity of the plague, thought less of it than they had done the day before. Various arrangements were made with the neighbouring farmers to render their new residence comfortable for the time, and occupation for

a while at least diverted thought. That day passed also in tranquillity ; but the next was to show a different scene.

CHAPTER IX.

It is wonderful what skill, activity and taste will do to produce comfort out of discomfort, neatness out of disorder. By the day after Bernard Marsh's arrival at Mirepoix, the greatest change had taken place in the old château; and Bernard himself had become, no one knew how, the heart and soul of all the arrangements. He was full of cheerful life and spirit, setting this thing and that thing and the other thing in order; now arranging some scattered furniture in the

saloon; now, with Sir Edward's permission, taking care that ample provision was made for the horses, now insuring that full preparation had been effected for feeding the family, without sending to any great distance to obtain supplies. He was a different creature altogether from the young man who, two months before, had appeared at Belaye, and, without knowing why, the demeanour of the whole family was changed towards him. The word "Master" was dropped altogether; and even Lucy herself, though she was a little timid at first, called him nothing but Bernard. One of the boys was always with him to assist in his arrangements; and, indeed, it was evident to Sir Edward Langdale that his young guest was striving to give employment both of mind and body to the family, in order to withdraw their thoughts from the terrible scourge which surrounded them.

The third morning rose at length, and the whole party assembled cheerfully to breakfast. Danger and care seemed forgotten, and only one incident chequered the early part of the morning. A courier left at the door, without coming in, a packet which he said he had brought over from Belaye, not having found the Chevalier Langdale there. It was found to contain the whole amount which had been taken from the party at the *table de Pierre*, and also Sir Edward's diamond ring.

Of course it was not without satisfaction that he recovered it, but Sir Edward had remarked the eyes of Bernard Marsh fixed two or three times, with a fixed, anxious sort of look, upon the face of his second boy. He gazed at the boy himself—but he could discover nothing, except, perhaps, that he was a little paler than usual. He was as gay, or perhaps gayer, than common with him, and joined in the sports of his brothers with all

alacrity. Towards noon, however, he came in complaining of headache; and the moment the eyes of Bernard Marsh fell upon him, his countenance became very grave. There were two bluish spots upon the boy's face; one upon the forehead, and one under the right eye, and Bernard knew the miserable sign too well. He lost not his presence of mind a moment, however.

"Sir Edward," he said, starting up with a gay look, "there is only one cure for a boy's headache; bed, Sir Knight, bed. My room is the nearest; and I took care yesterday the bed should be comfortable, so Master Richard shall have that for the time;" and catching the boy up in his arms, he carried him away at once.

Sir Edward Langdale followed; but he dared not question his young companion, merely aiding to undress his son and put him to bed. Bernard Marsh was all cheer-

fulness, as long as he was in that room ; but the moment he had quitted it with his host, he said, gravely,

"I think, Sir Edward, it would be better for you to send to Paris for a physician. I would go for one myself; but circumstances prevent me from entering Paris."

"Has the boy got the plague, Bernard?" said Sir Edward, grasping him tight by the arm; "you have seen it—has he got the plague?"

"I fear he has," answered Bernard Marsh, "he has two spots on his face, which I never saw but in that disease."

"I saw them, I saw them!" replied Sir Edward; "my poor boy!"

"Though it is certainly a very terrible and often fatal illness," said Bernard Marsh, in a very gentle tone, "yet many recover from it; and I have remarked that careful nursing and unremitting attention do more

to bring about a happy issue than any medicines which I have ever seen given. I will undertake to be poor Richard's nurse; and we will hope for the best."

Sir Edward wrung his hand hard.

"Thou art, indeed, a noble friend!" he said, "but I will share the task with you, Bernard."

"At all events," replied the young gentleman, "Lady Langdale and the rest of the family had better go, or keep themselves entirely in the other wing of the house."

"She will not do it," said Sir Edward: "this must be told, of course; for I have no idea of concealment in families; and Lucette will never leave her plague-stricken boy."

Bernard looked down, but only murmured in reply,

"She is right;" but he then added, suddenly, "at all events, Sir Edward, you

had better send to Paris for a physician, and if you can get a bottle of the plague-water of Madame Lavange, which I have heard is a powerful preventive, we may stop this from spreading further."

"I will go myself," replied Sir Edward, "and bring some one with me before to-morrow morning. It is but seventeen leagues, and can be done easily. But let us go in and tell this sad news."

At none of the events just detailed, had Lucette or Lucy been present; but while the eldest and the third boy were hanging round their father in the hall, and inquiring eagerly what was the matter with Richard, Lady Langdale and her daughter came down from above, and the sad truth was told. A few tears naturally gushed from Lucette's eyes; and she said, "God help us!" Then, turning to her husband, she asked,

"Where can we send Lucy, and the other

boys?" adding, "Lucy, my dear child, you must go directly."

"Mother, you always taught me that I was to do my duty," replied Lucy, firmly; "my duty is with Richard; and I will not leave him."

"But there are plenty here to give every attendance, my child," said Sir Edward. "Our young friend here, who has seen the disease, nobly offers to take a part of our cares; and though I must ride to Paris to bring a physician, I will be back ere morning and relieve his watch."

"Father, I must have my share," said Lucy, "you must not deprive me of that privilege. If my brother were to die, and I had not tended him, I should never have any peace."

"Let it be so, then, my husband," said Lucette. "We will none of us shrink from our duty. Let us take it in turns to attend

upon the sick, and trust to that merciful God in whose hand is life and death."

In about half-an-hour, Sir Edward rode away with a heavy heart for Paris ; and the day at the château of Mirepoix passed sadly over. Lady Langdale could hardly be persuaded to leave her boy's room even for a little rest. Bernard Marsh never quitted him, and when Lucette was persuaded to retire for a short time, and suffer Lucy to take her place, Bernard was still watching by his side. The poor boy was now very ill, burning with fever and talking incoherently from time to time. More of those terrible blue spots had appeared on various parts of his person, and no longer any doubt remained that he suffered from plague in one of its severest forms. But Lucy lost not her firmness or composure for a moment. She glided calmly and quietly about the room, smoothing the sick pillow, seeking for a little

vinegar to mingle with the water, gently opening or closing the windows, as the caprices of the poor boy required ; and when he dozed away into a restless slumber, she sat silently watching with Bernard Marsh, fearing to awaken the sufferer even by a whisper. When the slumber became more profound, almost approaching stupor, she conversed in low tones with the companion of her watch, seeming to derive much comfort and consolation from the words he spoke. His knowledge of the disease, his calm firmness under its actual presence, the hopeful tone in which he spoke, all seemed to reassure her ; and that night's vigil was not without salutary effects on Lucy's mind.

"I wish you would go to bed, Bernard," she said ; "you have been here all day. I can tend him quite well now. See how he sleeps ; and my mother will be back in a few minutes, I am sure."

"I am not in the least tired," replied Bernard Marsh. "If you knew how often I have kept watch for whole nights together, you would understand that this does not fatigue me. I wish, however, that you would set on this side of the bed, where the wind would blow over you to him."

Lucy smiled and changed her seat.

"It little matters," she said. "We are in the chamber of death; I feel it. The will of God will decide the rest. Do people ever recover from this pestilence, Bernard?"

"Oh, yes," replied Bernard Marsh; "some years ago, when I was a mere boy, and with the King's army at Oxford, one of my brothers, since dead, was seized with this pestilence at Barnet. I went to him directly, and never left him. He recovered; and I have known many others. Indeed, two out of three get well."

"Did ever you see any one so ill as he is,

restored to health?" asked Lucy. "How terrible he looks! One would hardly know him—in twelve short hours!"

"I have seen people much worse than he is, quite well within the year," replied Bernard, and then, fearing he was raising hope almost too high, he added, "I do not much like this heavy sleep. I have known people wake from it much worse."

Lucy rose and bent her head over her brother, watching his face as he lay breathing heavily before her. As she did so, her beautiful black hair fell over her shoulders, and her form seemed to assume additional lightness and grace, while her rich, warm complexion contrasted strangely with the bluish tinge upon the cheek of the suffering boy. To the eyes of Bernard Marsh she looked like an angel bending over the dying to meet the departing spirit at the portals of death.

Before it was fully day, Sir Edward Langdale arrived from Paris, accompanied by a physician, a young man of talent, who was the only person whom even money would bribe to go into the infected district. He was a grave and an eager man; and if he had not much experience, he had much energy. As soon as he saw the little boy, his face fell; but he relaxed no effort, and by all the means that were known in those days, he endeavoured both to save the sufferer, and to prevent the infection from spreading through the house. Free air was admitted everywhere, fumigations of many kinds were used, the plague waters of Madame Lavange were administered largely.

Vain, vain, all vain! the destroying angel had gone forth, and was not to be satisfied without its appointed number. Several of the servants fled; several re-

mained; some caught the disease with more or less severity. But let us not pause on the terrible history. At the end of the month, health had returned to the château at Mirepoix; but sadness and gloom were upon it. Lady Langdale had had the malady badly, but had recovered; her eldest son was also convalescent. Lucy had had it very lightly; her sweet calmness seemed to have disarmed the enemy; three of the servants had died; Sir Edward and Bernard Marsh had escaped entirely; but there were two boys less in the house: and the father and mother, the brother and sister mourned for those who were taken away from the face of the earth at the moment when earth is brightest, and hope is leading on life most gaily.

CHAPTER X.

A month again passed ; the air became cool, nay, even frosty in the nights and mornings ; the pestilence passed away, and the whole neighbouring country was declared free of disease. The family of Sir Edward Langdale returned from Mirepoix to Belaye, but the change which had come upon their household since they had left their favourite residence, was as great as that which came over the temperature, and somewhat similar

in character. Every one of them felt that the world was colder, that there was some sunshine gone; and when moments of thought intruded, and they remembered the loving eyes and happy looks which they could see no more, it was as if a frost—an eager and a biting frost—fell upon their hearts, and rendered the very brightness of safety chilling. But there were other changes that had taken place in that family, of as much importance to our history. The feelings of Bernard Marsh and Lucy Langdale towards each other were very much altered. They could never look upon each other with the same eyes again, after their vigils by the dying boys, and a long course of mutual sympathy and reliance. All the family indeed regarded Bernard Marsh in a different light from that in which they had viewed him before. His noble self-devotion, his fortitude, his untiring

activity and skill, his almost womanly kindness to the sick and dying children, had made them all feel as if he were a son or a brother.

But the change was greater than this in Lucy. It had been gradual, and to herself almost imperceptible; but yet from time to time she would be startled at her own sensations, she would think it almost wrong to look upon him as a being of a superior kind, to let him occupy so much—nay, can we not say, the whole of her thoughts; and once or twice, too, such reflections would bring a little coldness upon her manner—perhaps it would be better to call it timidity. But it seldom lasted for an hour; and his presence would soon make her as gentle and familiar again. She might say “Master Bernard” once or twice; but it was speedily “Bernard” once more; and if the truth must be told, notwithstanding this little hesitancy, when

Bernard Marsh, as was now much his custom, rode out with her brother in the park, taught him the use and management of the sword on horseback, showed him how to parry the push of a pike, or to strike even a minute object without exposing his own person, Lucy would creep to a window whence she could see them, and return more thoughtful than when she went.

It would be unfair to expose poor Lucy's feelings thus without saying something of those of Bernard Marsh. Now there are a thousand different ways of falling in love in this world; and I have descanted upon this subject enough in other works to render it unnecessary to dwell upon it here. But I only wish to point out that Bernard Marsh was not one of those people who tumble in love at every step, whose heart is a mere barrel of gunpowder, ready to explode at the first touch of the match. He had in life had

other matters to attend to, and he had somehow cultivated the notion, that it was better for him, placed as he was, to avoid all sensations, all affections even, which could withdraw his mind from the great object of his life. He knew what an absorbing thing is love, and he had resolved never to trust himself within its influence. But could he pass through such scenes as he had passed through with Lucy Langdale, could he see that beautiful form and lovely face bending without a thought for herself over her plague-stricken brethren, could he trace in every word, in every thought that heavenly mingling of tenderness and firmness, and keep his resolution? It was all in vain: day by day, and hour by hour, he felt admiration changing into tenderness, and tenderness spreading forth into love.

We must not say that he gave way without a struggle, that he did not give up many

an hour to thought, that he did not consider his position in every point of view, and ask himself how he should act. But struggle, and thought, and consideration were of no avail. It appeared with him, as it happens with most men, that these resources came too late. Bernard Marsh was in love before he knew it.

In regard to how he should act, the question was easily decided. He resolved to let things take their course, to withhold nothing from Sir Edward Langdale, whenever a fit opportunity of explanation should occur, to act towards Lucy as he had previously acted, without thought or restraint, but to bind her by no ties till he had obtained her father's full consent; and Bernard thought he could obtain it. At the same time he did not deceive himself so far as to imagine that he would abstain from seeking her love. Strange to say,

with a blindness common to unpresumptuous men, he did not at all comprehend that Lucy loved him already.

There was one way of ingratiating himself with Sir Edward Langdale which Bernard took unconsciously. Both Lucy and her brother, though they had felt the pestilence but in a light form, had been greatly weakened by it, and were still languid and feeble when they returned to Belaye; and a few words dropped by Sir Edward showed his young friend the anxiety he felt for his boy's future health. From that moment, Bernard Marsh applied himself by robust, but temperate exercise, to strengthen the young lad's constitution. He led him to all manly sports, was himself his companion and instructor, little thinking that while engaged with friendly zeal in this task he was winning the admiration of the father, and fostering the love of the daughter by

the skill and grace which he himself displayed.

As far as his efforts with young Henry Langdale were concerned, the course he took was perfectly successful. Every day the lad gained greater strength. His cheek recovered the hue of health; his chest expanded, his arms became robust, and sleep returned to his pillow at night. But Lucy still continued feeble. She became weary before the day was done; and the rose which was once so bright in her cheek seemed faded away for ever, though the eyes were still as bright as stars, and the lips kept their carnation.

It was one evening not very long after their return that the whole family, as was now their custom, had assembled together in the great saloon, and Lucy seemed more than usually fatigued. Her mother urged her to go to bed; but she replied, with a smile,

"I will go in a few minutes ; but I have taken a strange fancy, dear mother, that if I could hear Bernard sing I should rest better."

There were two who started at her words ; one was Sir Edward Langdale, who looked up suddenly from the book he was reading with an air of surprise. The other was Bernard Marsh, who instantly rose and went to the neighbouring chamber for a lute that was there. He returned in a moment, and sitting quietly down, first put the instrument in tune, and then throwing his hands over the strings, produced a strain of exquisite and solemn music unequalled by anything that his auditors had ever heard before.

"This should be played on the organ," said Bernard Marsh, "and sang by four voices."

He felt that it was a moment when music

might be a medicine, and his subject and his melody were well chosen.

Turn not away the head,
As if no joy were left,
As if e'en faith were dead,
And life of hope bereft.

Bend not thine eyes to earth,
As if repose were there,
As if no smiles were worth
The calm of mute despair.

One lapse of sunny day
Pictures man's life below,
Soft in the morning ray,
Fierce in the mid-day glow.

Weeping perchance, at eve,
Through hopeful gleams of light,
Unwilling earth to leave;
Setting at length in night.

Yet in the darkest hour,
When not a star is seen,
Faith has her grandest power
E'en in that sombre scene.

Man knows another day
Once more shall greet his eyes,
And all that's past away,
In greater beauty rise.

All listened, all felt the application of the words, but Lucy felt most strongly, bending forward as if to catch every tone, till at length her head rested on her hands, and then, when she covered her eyes, the bright tear-drops were seen forcing their way between her fingers and coursing down her cheeks.

When he had done she started up, saying, "Thank you, thank you, Bernard, this will do me much good. I have wanted tears for the last month;" and she hurriedly left the room. Her mother and brother followed her, and Bernard remained alone with Sir Edward Langdale. Both were silent for some minutes, the one letting the lute rest upon his knee while his eyes were

bent down upon the strings in deep thought, the other gazing at him with a grave and inquiring look.

Suddenly Bernard raised his eyes, saying,

“Sir Edward Langdale, it is time that we should have some explanation.”

“I think so, Bernard,” said the knight; “what I have seen this evening has taken me by surprise.”

“Painful surprise, no doubt,” said Bernard Marsh; “but perhaps some part of that pain may be dissipated. I never thought to love any one. I gave up my whole youth to one great cause, and I had thought that no one—no passion, no affection, could ever alienate one thought from that cause. But I love your daughter, Sir Edward, with feelings that have grown upon me imperceptibly, but none the less powerfully—”

“Have you spoken to Lucy on this subject?” interrupted Sir Edward, gravely.

“Not one word,” answered Bernard. “I would not have done so for a diadem : first, because I had not spoken to you ; and secondly, because I have not at this time the means of maintaining her in that rank to which she and I are born.”

He laid a strong emphasis on the word “I,” and Sir Edward replied, after a moment’s thought,

“The loss of my property of Buckley, confiscated to the use of the Parliament, has very much diminished my income ; but still, Bernard, I am not an avaricious man. At a future period Lucy will have competence, for the estate of Mirepoix is, to use the English phrase, ‘settled upon my wife’s eldest daughter.’ My son takes this property, as well as some others ; but Mirepoix is a fine estate.”

“Now I understand,” said Bernard Marsh, abstractedly.

"What do you mean?" asked Sir Edward.

"Merely that I understand why Madame de Chevreuse should wish to obtain possession of your daughter. Doubtless she had promised her hand either to Monsieur de Breteuil or to Monsieur de Ville-neuve."

"Perhaps so," said Sir Edward; "but to the point: I cannot suffer Lucy to engage her hand or her affections to a man of whom I know little or nothing, however much I esteem what I have seen of him."

"Ah! Sir Edward Langdale. I fear you have somewhat changed your views since your own youth!"

Bernard Marsh took a pen from the inkstand on the table, and wrote four words upon a scrap of paper, then quietly handed it across to Sir Edward Langdale, who

started up the instant he had read it, and grasped him by the hand, exclaiming,

“My noble lord, how glad I am to see you!”

But Bernard put his fingers on his lips, saying,

“Hush! my dear Sir, that name must never be mentioned while I am here in France. It is only on the condition that I remain perfectly incognito that I have permission to remain at all. The moment I am generally known, I must remove to Breda and join the Prince, which, for many reasons, I do not wish to do at present.”

“But I fear you cannot long remain concealed,” said Sir Edward Langdale. “You spoke of having seen the Prince de Condé, and when you returned you had two men with you who disappeared the same night.”

“His Highness has kept and will keep

my secret carefully," said Bernard Marsh ;
"and as for the two men, they are old and faithful friends, on whom I can rely. But now let me return to the point. Do you object, Sir Edward, to my seeking your daughter's affection? for if you do, I must quit this dwelling before daylight to-morrow."

"Can you ask the question seriously?" said Sir Edward Langdale. "The noblest of the noble, the bravest of the brave, could never ask the hand of Edward Langdale's daughter in vain."

"But remember," said Bernard Marsh, "that he is also the poorest of the poor."

"That matters not," replied the other. "None can say in this strange age what a few days or a few months may bring forth ; but, happen what will, we have enough, and you shall share with the rest. I have long seen and known that you were not what

you appeared ; but I took you for another person. You are so young for all you have undergone. My lord duke, your brother, whom I know well, must be much older."

"Many years," said Bernard Marsh ; "I am the youngest of the family ; but my brother led me into battle at fifteen, and fraternal love, as well as loyalty, has since commanded my whole thoughts."

"Now God forbid," said Sir Edward, "that love for a child of mine should withdraw those thoughts from the holy cause you have so well sustained, as long as there is one hope left ; but I have learned by some experience that the bright paintings of the old romanciers are not altogether fanciful, and that high and noble love is inseparably connected with high and noble actions—nay, is a source from which they well up as bright waters from a fountain. But let us speak

no more of this to-night. Lucy is still very young, and we shall still have time and to spare."

CHAPTER XI.

THERE is such a thing as 'delicious silence,' although the old gentleman who first put those two words in such near relationship, was, I believe, well laughed at, in his day and generation, by the daws and other small birds who live by pecking the fruits of literature. Yes, I have known and felt it, when I have escaped from buzzing crowds and rushing carriages, from all the commingled sounds of joy and sorrow, folly, remorse, anguish, selfishness, despair, merriment, and

madness, which roar in a great city, to the calm, quiet woods, or solitary glens of my native land. I have felt it still more profoundly, when in the ancient forests of the new world; the charms of strong contrast are not added, indeed, to heighten the impression of the stillness, but that stillness is so profound that silence is not only delicious but sublime.

But there is another sort of silence, too, which is delicious—a moral, mystical silence—a silence of the heart—when eager feeling and turbulent emotion are stilled as if by the voice of a divinity above the waves, repressing the vexed waters of passion by the command, “Peace! be still!”

Heaven knows, that in the bosoms of Bernard Marsh and Lucy Langdale, there were feelings, if not turbulent, at least strong and struggling, during the few weeks following the conversation detailed in the last

chapter. No word of love was spoken, no feeling of the heart found voice.

At first the restraint was painful, even to both. The young cavalier, less self-confident in the hall than in the field, would fain have had some assurance of Lucy's regard, before those words were spoken which never could be recalled, and the reply to which would leave his fate, he thought, one of happiness or misery for ever. The first strong affections of his heart were given; but there was a joy even in their muttered indulgence which he feared to lose by one rash word, and he went on letting the flowers of the heart expand from day to day, like buds in the unconformed sunshine of the spring.

On her part, the feelings of Lucy Langdale were far more strange and difficult of utterance. He knew, he could not be ignorant of what was going on in his own breast;

but she dared not scan her own sensations or his. A new world was opening to her—the world of the heart; and it was full of wonders. She might often ask herself what his changed manner meant; she might enquire almost with fear why his society had become so dear to her; she might feel terrified at the strong inclination which led her to seek it, and might wonder that her parents so readily yielded to every plan which brought her and Bernard Marsh together.

And yet no word was spoken; but gradually the newness and the strangeness passed away, and feelings of trust and confidence grew up. There is an interpreter more eloquent than words, a voice more clear, more convincing, than ever issued forth from human lips, a writing of the soul upon the tablet of the face, which cannot long be misunderstood.

True, like words inscribed in that sym-

pathetic ink of which we read, it can only be deciphered by those who have the secret ; but love soon gives the key, and all is clear. Yet, when at last the mystic scroll was read, and Lucy and Bernard felt that between themselves at least there wanted no seal upon the contract, no spoken word to tell them that each loved the other, for a time there was silence still ; but it was because such ‘silence is delicious.’ It is the bloom upon the mature fruit, the light shining through the ripe grape. Woe be to him who presses it too roughly !

I am fond of such themes, though they are of things passed away from me—perhaps the more so because they have passed. Who can look upon a child peacefully sleeping, and not think with refreshment of heart, “How sweet !” Who can behold two hearts full of innocent love, without saying, “Oh, could I love so again !” But I must not

dwell upon these things too long. Let us go on.

I have said that Lucy had been educated in great seclusion, and knew little of the conventional restraints of those days—restraints not quite banished even yet from society in England or France, where at that time a young woman's life vacillated between gay license and hard restriction ; but she did not know enough to make her marvel at the perfect liberty allowed her by both father and mother in the company of Bernard Marsh. The morning ride on horseback with him and her brother, in the fresh and bracing month of January, was not only allowed, but encouraged ; and the reason assigned was the re-establishment of her health, to which, in Henry's case, the same exercise had contributed so much. But this was not all ; many a pleasant opportunity for private communication was given, for which no such

reasons could be named. True, there was always some motive to be found. Her voice, though sweet and rich, wanted cultivation, and who could give it such finish as Master Bernard? If the wind were too high, or the turf too slippery for exercise on horseback, the long, straight walks of the park, the alleys of hornbeam and yoke-elm, afforded long and pleasant promenades; but still it was thought better that she should have some more robust companion than the ordinary soubrette; and Bernard Marsh was the invariable guide of her morning walk. Liberty grows into habit; and as Lucy's health and strength returned, leave and license were no longer sought, but taken as a matter of course; and, while the season advanced towards the brighter days of spring, when no excuse existed for this exclusive companionship, it followed easily, merely by habit.

Thus, early one morning in the month of

February—that month when a solitary wild flower will be seen beneath the brushwood, and rabbits run frequently across the open walks, and the thrush sits upon the bare tree-tops, and sings a welcome to the approaching summer, Lucy and Bernard strolled out before breakfast, and, as the day was warm as spring, sat down for a few moments beneath a tall oak.

“I will sing you a song, Lucy,” he said, “an old song of my own land, and try if I can outvoice yon bird above our heads. I can tell my tale of happiness, mayhap, as well as he,” and resting one hand in hers, upon her knee, he sang.

S O N G.

“My Love is like the red, red rose
That’s newly blown in June;
Oh, my Love is like the melody
That’s sweetly played in tune.

So fair, so fair, are thou, my Love,
So deep in love am I,
That I will love thee best, most best,
Till all the seas run dry.

“Thine eyes are like the stars above,
Thy breath is like the breeze,
That wafts the odour of the flowers
Beneath the summer trees.
So sweet, so sweet, art thou, my Love,
So deep in love am I,
That I will love thee best, most best,
Till all the seas run dry.

“Thy heart is like the gentle dove,
Thy soul an angel's given
To guide my spirit up with thine
Unto thy native Heaven;
So bright, so bright art thou, my Love,
So deep in love am I,
That I will love thee best, most best,
Till all the seas run dry.”

The air is attributed by some to David Rizzio; the first stanza is very ancient; the last two were more modern. But it was not

the music, though it is exquisite, nor the words, though they probably said all Bernard Marsh could intend to say, which gave force to the song. It was the look and the manner which put the stamp of the heart upon the poetry, and as so often happens, brought the latent truth forth from its nest of flowers. The name of love was then first mentioned between them. Then, for the first time, that musical—that magic word sounded on Lucy's ear. Then, for the first time, the enigma which is written in dark characters on every woman's heart was solved for her, and Lucy felt fully she was beloved, and that she loved in return.

When in the tales of fairy land the talisman is first touched by the hand destined to possess it, the shrine trembles, the guardian spirits grow faint before the will of Fate, and the temple is shaken to its foundation. Was it not so with poor Lucy Langdale when first

the great mystery of her feelings and his was unveiled to her? Ah, yes! Her limbs quivered like a leaf in the light wind of spring, her cheek turned pale, her heart beat as if it would have burst; and she would have fallen forward on the ground, but that there were arms open to catch her.

"Mine, Lucy, mine!" murmured Bernard Marsh, as he pressed her to his heart. "Mine, with your father and your mother's full consent. Oh, say that you are mine!"

For a moment she was silent, and some tears crushed themselves among her jetty eyelashes and glittered like diamond sparks upon the lids; but the clasp of her hand upon his grew somewhat firmer, and at last she looked up for an instant; and the one word "Bernard!" told all that could be told.

It was a moment of exquisite happiness to both; but it was but a moment. There was a rustle among the trees on the other side of

a little brook which ran gurgling through the fallen leaves at the foot of the knoll where they had been sitting ; and a man dressed in the gay costume of the court jumped across, exclaiming :

“Very pretty, indeed ! This will be news for Sir Edward Langdale.”

It was a moment when the temper of an angel might have given way ; the cheek of Bernard Marsh grew fiery red.

“Begone, Monsieur de Breteuil,” he exclaimed, “or I will chastise you as I have already chastised one of your companions !”

They were the last words Lucy heard ; a blow was struck, swords were drawn ; and after two passes the weapon of the Marquis de Breteuil was flying among the tree tops.

What was it put a fiercer and more angry spirit into the heart of Bernard Marsh than

had ever before tenanted his bosom? Probably it was that there was a new passion there—a passion that intensifies all others. However that may be, the first impulse was to draw back his sword in order to pass it through the body of his adversary; but a better feeling triumphed.

“Get you gone!” he said, “get you gone, for fear I treat you like a dog. I would not forget that I am a gentleman, whatever you may be.”

Breteuil sprang to regain his sword, and though he was somewhat cowed, yet Heaven knows what the end might have been, had not Sir Edward Langdale and two or three servants—some his own men, and some strangers in riding gear—come up at the moment.

“What is this?” exclaimed the knight, “my lord!—Bernard! see to your young lady, Pierrot.”

“I have been foolish enough to be angry, Sir Edward,” said Bernard Marsh; “this person, Marquis of Breteuil, thought fit to intrude in a rude manner upon my conversation with Lucy; and I had well nigh given him a more severe lesson than I gave one of his loose companions a month or two since. But I am calm now.”

“Then put up, put up!” said Sir Edward, “attend to Lucy. She has fainted. Monsieur de Breteuil, you have brought me miserable news in the letter of which you were the bearer. I descended as soon as I had read it, to offer you the hospitality of my house, though it must be a house of mourning; but you have brought also strife and dissention into my family, and I can now only wish you a safe journey back to Paris. I cannot entertain a man who draws his sword in the presence of a lady. How fares it, Lucy? She is better—her colour comes back. ’Tis

all over, my girl; Bernard, aid her back to the house."

"He struck me first, Sir Edward," said Breteuil; "I draw not my sword before women; but I bide no buffet from any man, be it given where it may."

"This noble gentleman would strike no man, Sir," replied the knight, "but upon just cause."

"This noble gentleman!" repeated Breteuil, with a sneer. "Well, perhaps I may meet this illustrious obscure again."

"Perhaps so," said Bernard Marsh, who still held his weapon unsheathed in his hand.

"Bernard!" said Sir Edward, in a melancholy tone; "they have murdered your King. Is this a day and hour to think of personal quarrels?"

Bernard Marsh pressed the hilt of his sword to his breast, and then thrust the blade back into the sheath, exclaiming,

“Now God forbid that this should ever be drawn again but to avenge him !”

Sir Edward Langdale waved Monsieur de Breteuil back with his hand, and then aiding Bernard Marsh to raise Lucy from the ground, joined in supporting her back towards the house.

CHAPTER XII.

TIME had passed ; month after month had gone by ; Lucy Langdale was in her nineteenth year, and still she was Lucy Langdale. But the months, the days, the hours had been filled with events which belong to the broad field of history, but which had twice snatched from the hand of Bernard Marsh the cup of happiness when it was at his very lips. Need we pause in our tale to relate those events to any one who has studied

that agitated period which intervened between the death of Charles the First and the summer of 1651? or need we dwell on the part taken therein by Edward Langdale and Bernard Marsh? Let us pass over that interval and all that it contained; the voyage to Scotland, the insults poured upon the young King by his fanatical and pedantic subjects at the north, his separation from his tried and trusty cavaliers, and his spirited march into England in hopes of that energetic support he was not destined to find. Suffice it that Bernard Marsh and Sir Edward Langdale were amongst those driven from the young King's side in Scotland, but never abandoned his cause, and that they were also among those who, retiring to England, endeavoured to raise a force to support their monarch, while he hurried forward from Carlisle towards Worcester.

It was a stormy night in the end of August,

and over the wide moor the wind blew in fierce gusts, dashing the large drops of rain against the little lozenges of glass in the casements of a small inn on the confines of Worcestershire. There was no thunder, though the air was intolerably warm, and loaded, it would seem, with electricity; but yet a voice could hardly have been heard in the house, unless raised to a very high pitch, so great was the noise made by the falling torrent and by the wind, now hissing among the whortle bushes and long reeds, now howling like an overburdened spirit among the tall, thin fir trees which dotted the heath. No voice, however, was heard within those walls, and the only tenants of the large room which served the purpose of kitchen and dining-hall, were an old man sitting at a table, with the long, gray locks falling over the thin hands by which his head was supported, and his good dame, but

a few years younger, though apparently somewhat more stout and hearty.

For her part, notwithstanding the heat of the atmosphere, she sat upon a settle by the fireside, and every now and then put on a stick or two of wood beneath a large caldron which simmered from a hook. Neither moved from their places, and for more than an hour neither spoke; but at length the old man said with a sigh,

“He won’t come to-night, Maud. The weather is too coarse. Hark ye now, what a song the wind is singing; and the rain would break the casement in, wer’t not for the big apple tree.”

“He’ll come, old Gaffer—he’ll come,” answered the woman, in a cross tone. “I don’t know my boy, if he don’t come. You are always croaning over the weather, and think as much of a drop of water as an

overslaugh. Who'd ever think you'd been a soldier?"

"Well, well, dame," replied the old man, "it's all that soldiering that stiffens one's joints. Many a worse night than this I've lain out, with no better blanket than the moor, and no warmer coverlid than the gray sky; but now it tells, good dame—now it tells."

"And, if you did so, why shouldn't your son?" said the old woman; "he's as hearty a man as ever you were, I wot. But come or not, there shall be hot broth ready for him and his folks, old man, if I sit here till cock-crow."

Both relapsed into silence again; for thirty years' experience had made the old soldier somewhat cautious of bringing his wife's tongue upon his head; and near half an hour passed without another word.

At length, however, he started up from a sort of semi-doze, exclaiming,

“Hark ! I hear horses’ feet splashing along the moor.”

“Pooh !” cried she, unwilling to deceive herself, but still listening eagerly, “ ’tis but a plump of rain. You are always thinking you hear—yes it is—it is horses’ feet ? Get down the ladle, Gaffer, and the big platters, and set the seats. I knew he would come. It is young Johnny, for sure—open the door a bit to show the light.”

The old man seemed active enough now, though he did make a terrible grimace as he twisted his rheumatic hip in starting up ; but he opened the house-door in a moment, and stood looking out, undaunted, in the heavy rain ; while his wife screamed for Betsy and Tom, and poured a flood of unsavoury epithets on the heads of the sleep-ridden servants.

The sound of horses' feet was heard plainly enough now, coming quickly across the heath, and there seemed to be many of them, for the beat of the hoofs was frequent and irregular. Before the horse-boy and the "slut," as the old lady called her, could get down beyond the kitchen-door, there was a cry of "Halt!" without, and the drawing of bridle-reins, and prancing, with a shrill neigh, as if one of the beasts at least recognized a place of shelter and rejoiced. But the old man suddenly came back into the kitchen, and partly turning his head, without shutting the door, put his finger on his lips as a sign to his wife, saying in a low voice,

"Strangers—troopers!"

The next moment he was all landlord-like civility, and as a small party of weather-beaten men walked carelessly in, it was,

"Give you good-night, sirs; give you

good-night. Terrible weather for August. Well, I wot how the seasons have changed since I was young ; but all things have changed for that matter. See to the horses, Tom ; put settles, Betsy ; a good, large stable here, gentlemen ! How many horses may there be ? Plenty of oats and hay, and that of the best."

During this address he had been running his eye over the strangers, and his face grew brighter as he saw the slouched hats and drooping feathers, the laced cloaks and velvet doublets of his guests.

Those were dangerous times, and even the poor man was forced to conceal the feelings of his heart ; for where tyranny takes the name of liberty, opinions become crimes, and might makes right. The host was cautious then ; and before he uttered a word that could commit him, left the strangers to gain some better indication of their party than

mere smart clothes and love-locks could afford. Indeed at first he doubted whether he had not made a mistake; for one of his guests, in plainer apparel than the rest, took him by the ear, saying—

“Verily, friend, thy praises of thine oats smack of malignancy and godless self-seeking. Thou wouldst palm thy musty provender upon us; and though the beasts do want the creature comforts as well as we, wouldst engage us with strong waters while they are fed on trash.”

But a roar of laughter, which followed this sally, set the good man’s heart at ease, and he was hurrying to bring forth the stone jug of strong Geneva, to which few cavaliers objected, when a tall young man, who had been standing at the door with one still younger, talking to the people without, gave his last orders, and turned into the inn. All made way for him as he advanced towards

the table, and fixing his keen, bright eye upon the landlord, he said—

“I fear, mine host, we have come upon you somewhat unexpectedly. Have you anything for these gentlemen to eat? The horses must be well fed, too: and though the men can sleep in the stable—for it seems a large one—they must also have some food. We have ridden twenty miles without bit or sup.”

“Oh, we can provide, we can provide, noble sir,” said the host; “there is plenty of bacon, and as good a cold salt round as ever was cut, and—and—”

His voice trembled as he spoke; his hesitation became greater and greater; and, at last dropped upon his knees before the young stranger, caught his hand and kissed it exclaiming,

“It is, I am sure it is! my noble lord the Earl of Dartmoor! who saved my poor old

life at long Marston Moor, and shot Colonel Langly of the Ironsides, (who had me down,) and then carried me out on your own horse. You were but a boy, then ; but I know you, I know you ! How can I ever forget you ?”

“I remember something of it,” replied the other, “you were one of those, if I am right, who made your way with Prince Rupert to Chester. We had to use our spurs, my friend ; but I trust a better time is coming now. Is there any news afloat in this part of the world ? Speak freely. We are all friends here.”

“Let us eat freely and drink freely first, my lord,” said one of the guests ; “for, by my fay, we have been long without. The old codger can tell his tale while we are employing our grinders.”

“Well, well,” said the young nobleman, who well knew the humour of his followers, “so let it be. Methinks we shall have time

without interruption, in this solitary place; but remember all, that though we shall have space enough to eat and drink, and obtain most needful news, we have no time for laziness. It is now nine o'clock, and every one who would follow me must be in the saddle by three. Sit ye down, gentlemen, and get what you can. I have lived long enough in these strifes to know that, if we eat not when we may, we may chance to have two days fasting. Eat and warm yourselves, I say. Master Henry and I must go for a moment to see that the horses are well cared for. If the men be not, by my troth, they are likely ones to help themselves."

Thus saying, he went out to the large stable, where he found the horses in course of being fed, and several of the men engaged in the laudable occupation of plucking cocks and hens, of whose presence they had speedily

disencumbered the chicken-house. Some words of warning, and a stern rebuke to a man whom he found drinking privately behind the stable-door, were all that the young gentleman spoke in the stable; but when he stood in the little garden, with the still younger man who had accompanied him, he turned to him gravely, saying, "These are sad scenes for you, Henry. It were well, dear youth, could they be avoided; but you yourself have found that exercise, though rough and wearisome, strengthens the limbs and confirms the constitution, and thus, with a noble mind, experience of even the ruder and baser things of the world, serves but to call forth and invigorate the high and pure feelings of the heart. We must bear with these men, not alone for the rich devoted spirit of loyalty which elevates them, but for a thousand qualities which they hide under this loose exterior. Not one of those fellows

who will set drinking and jesting there all night, would not peril life and all that it is worth to-morrow, to do that which they believe to be a good action."

"I believe it truly, Bernard," replied the lad. "Have not you mingled for years with such men? But still after the quiet life I have so long led, it somewhat shocks one to see such recklessness."

"Well, then, take some supper, and go to bed and repose," replied the Earl, "it is well not to become too familiar with what is bad in our common nature. To-morrow, or at furthest the day after, we shall rejoin your noble father; and then must speedily come an event that will set at rest fear and hope for ever. The King has a fine army; but yet the traitors have a better; and the country rises not as I could have wished. We must do our best, and God defend the right! But one word more, Harry. If I fall, as may be,

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for one cannot escape these occasions always, comfort poor Lucy, and say that for her sake I did not expose myself rashly."

"I will go with you, Bernard, wherever you go," answered Henry Langdale, pressing his hand, "but we shall soon join my father, I trust. He cannot be far off."

"God knows," said Bernard Marsh, whom we must now know by another name, and recognise as that famous Lord Dartmoor, whose exploits even as a mere lad, had raised him to the height of renown, and even eclipsed those of his noble brother the Duke of —, to whom even the stern regicides conceded the terrible privilege of laying his royal master in his bloody bier — "God knows! I have not heard of the King for many days, and only guess he must be tending towards Worcester. The last news of your father was from Lancashire, and his letters were full of hope and spirit; but I say God knows, and

he only. We are scattered like a flock of doves at the first shot of the fowler, some here, some there, with little unity of action, small means of information, and hostile forces gathering round us in every quarter. In the meantime, the last accounts I had from France, and yours too, if I mistake not, were anything but consoling—your dear and excellent mother almost driven from her own house by the factions of the land; all that we trusted to others, whom we esteemed our friends, neglected, as is always the case with the affairs of the absent; her estates and those of her husband threatened with confiscation on the most idle pretences, and danger of Lucy herself falling into the hands of the worst enemies of your house. No, no: you must live, Harry, especially if death is to be my lot. You have much to do, my duties to perform, and happier days to see; for this cannot last always. Even nations recover

sooner or later from the fits of delirium which sometimes seize them !”

He spoke slowly and in a desponding tone ; and then turned to the little inn. During the absence of the two young men, the guests they had left had done justice to the good cheer of the host, and had evidently made intimate acquaintance with the stone jug of strong waters, of whose possession he had boasted.

The host himself seemed somewhat fidgety and uneasy, and the good dame had stoutly resisted all attempts upon the large iron pot which she kept boiling over the fire. “That was broth for her son,” she said, and added in a low tone, “it was not fit for gentles such as them ;” but when any one came too near, she showed a hotter spirit, and, well accustomed to deal with the rough soldiery, whether cavalier or roundhead, kept them at bay, now with the large two pronged meat-fork,

now with the great skimming-ladle, some scalding drops falling from which on the knee of a too persistent intruder into the mysteries of the caldron, strongly enforced her arguments

However when the Earl re-entered, one half the party were singing, pouring forth generally cavalier songs, neither very remarkable for decency nor melody, while others, in a somewhat maudlin state, intoned psalm tunes, which they had probably learned during some period of enforced and hypocritical submission to the dominant party. "Hey for Cavaliers!" was being shouted by at least half a dozen voices; and although the appearance of one whom they all revered, notwithstanding his youth, produced some change in their demeanour, yet it was evident that they intended to "make a night of it after their wet ride," to use their own expression.

“Ay, here comes one who can really sing us a song,” cried one of the most vociferous shouters. “My Lord, I heard you sing once as I never heard any one else. Do give us a stave now, for the honour of King Charles.”

“On one condition, gentlemen,” said the Earl, “and that is that after I have done, we all lie down to rest. Remember that at this very moment we are surrounded by dangers, and that the King’s crown may depend upon strong arms and clear heads to-morrow, or the next day. Foul fall the man who would peril his sovereign’s throne for a late carouse or a cup of strong drink ! If you are all agreed, I will sing, although to say sooth, I am much in need of some repose myself.”

“Agreed, agreed !” cried several voices, while one added, “Empty the jug, Colonel Johns ; singing never spoiled good liquor ;”

and taking a seat amongst them, Lord
Dartmoor sung,

They've laid it low, that kingly head,
With mockery and insult slain.
For us he fought, for us he bled,
For us he ventured all, in vain.
But loyal hearts are not yet dead,
And the King shall have his own again.

Ho, for a brighter field! What ho!
Another Charles has risen again.
Wipe out the days of pain and woe!
And strike for royalty amain!
One glorious hour, one conquering blow—
And the King shall have his own again.

Perchance, before to-morrow's sun
Shall set beneath the western main,
'The traitors' hour-glass shall have run,
And justice come in victory's train.
Forward, strong hearts! the day is won;
And the King shall have his own again.

But let us win, or let us lose,
What heart, to yield, shall not disdain,
Till God, in His good time, shall choose

To free our country from its chain;
And far and wide shall spread the news,
The King has got his own again.

CHAPTER XIII.

“Now, gentlemen, your promise!” said Bernard Marsh, as soon as his song was concluded, “let us to bed and prepare for to-morrow; for we have work before us, depend upon it.”

“Take some supper and some strong waters, my Lord,” replied one of the Cavaliers: “you have neither eaten nor drank all day, though you have worked like a horse.”

“A crust of bread and a cup cold of water,”

answered Lord Dartmoor, well knowing how much more efficacious example is than precept in this follow-my-leader world. "When the battle is won, I will do you all justice, in as brimming a glass as ever was filled ; but foul fall me if I drink anything but water till 'the King has got his own again !' To bed, gentlemen ! to bed ; and wake with strong arms, clear heads, and stout hearts."

There was some wrangling and confusion ere the guests dispersed. Some wanted the best chambers, some were content with the worst, so that their leader was well accommodated : others were very well contented to stay where they were and take their rest on settles, or even on the floor, rather than exercise powers of locomotion - which had been somewhat embarrassed by the contents of the stone jug. The landlord insisted, with a pertinacity not to be expected from his feeble nature, on reserving the best room

up-stairs for guests whom he averred would arrive during the night, and his good dame had the key. Thus the door could not be opened without violence ; and the most resolute of his customers were at length content to put up with what accommodation they could find, rather than waste their time in breaking through oak planks.

At length silence was restored ; and though there was snoring from above, and sounds of deep sleep from those little beds, let into the wall, and much in the form of knife trays, still to be found in many of the ancient cottages of England, none seemed waking but the Earl of Dartmoor, and the old landlord and his wife.

Young Henry Langdale had retired some time before, and the good dame sat gazing upon the pot, which seemed her chief object of interest in life, while her husband placed himself behind the young cavalier, who

continued in meditative mood at the table, and from time to time cast a somewhat anxious and inquiring look at the Earl, as if he wondered why he did not go to bed with the rest.

At length Bernard Marsh turned suddenly towards him, saying, almost sternly.

"Come hither, Master Grey! What meant that sound of horses' feet just now? Who are the guests you expect to-night?"

"I expect my son, Sir," answered the old man in a somewhat hesitating tone: "he has gone across the moor."

"And come back again, and brought more than one horse with him," replied the young nobleman: "there were six horses at least passed that window. I saved your life, old man. Do you mean to betray me?"

"Now, God forbid!" said the landlord, warmly. "I believe it was my son; but you see, my lord, I just whispered a

word to Tom, the ostler, to warn him that there were troopers in the house ; and to lead him round to the shed behind, away from the stable ; he has got women with him—ladies of good estate ; and God knows what may happen in these rough times.”

The young Earl raised his head high, with an air almost haughty, saying,

“Think you, Master Grey, that I have not power over these men, to bid the best of them back if he transgresses the rule of proper discipline ? By my faith, if so, I have laboured through life in vain. Go out and tell these guests to come in. They are safe, were they Cromwell’s daughters ; yet stay,” he added, as the old man turned to depart. “They have men with them of course—how many ?”

“I know not, my lord,” answered the old man ; “Tom has not come back.”

“I heard no horses’ feet go hence,” said the young Earl, thoughtfully ; “but woe to you, if any one has gone to warn the round-heads of our lodging here. Go and send one of the men to me. Let the rest stay where they are, till I have time to inquire into the matter.”

The distance from the inn to the shed seemed to be far ; for the old man was long in returning ; but when he came back he was accompanied by a stout-looking peasant of some thirty years of age, light of limb, but strong and muscular. His face was one of those frank and honest visages, so often seen amongst the English peasantry ; for though the dark grey eye and broad forehead showed a world of intellect, there was nothing small or mean in the expression of the whole, and he raised his look full upon Lord Dartmoor’s countenance, as he entered, as if his heart were quite at ease, notwithstanding the drenched and drizzled state of his apparel.

“What is your name?” said the young nobleman at once, “methinks I have seen you before.”

“Likely,” replied the other, “my name is John Grey, or young John, this old merchant’s son.”

“Merchant !” said Lord Dartmoor, in some surprise.

“Ay,” answered the other ; “when he was young he dealt in hard blows. Since then he has dealt in smooth words ; now he deals in strong waters.”

“Well,” answered the Earl, “we have no time now for riddles, my good friend. How many have you in your party?”

“Eight, Sir,” replied the peasant. “Three women, myself and four men—two to them and two to me.”

“Is that the same number you set out with?” inquired Lord Dartmoor ; but the man answered frankly, and with a laugh,

“No—they are more by one. He joined us on the way. But if you want to know, Sir, whether any one has left us on the way, I say no. Odds life, our horses would hardly carry us any further on such a night as this. Now I pray you, Sir—my lord, father calls you—let us come in to the fire and get something warm; for there are two beautiful ladies with us, out of whose cheeks all this rain would have washed the red, were it not of heaven’s own painting. They are not fit for such rough nights, nor the chamber-maid either; for she is a dainty little bit of goods as ever I saw, though she be a French girl and speaks small English.”

“And what are their names?” asked the Earl, his curiosity a good deal awakened.

“Faith, I can hardly tell you that,” said the man. “One is a Countess, that I know; and the other is her daughter—not easy to tell which is the youngest or prettiest; but

the young one seems to know some of your people; for as we passed the back of the house there was a person singing in here, 'the King shall have his own again,' and the lady said she knew the voice, and would fain have come in at once; but mamma was more cautious, and did not choose to trust to a mere sound."

"She was wise," said Bernard Marsh; "the young lady must have been mistaken. But, pray, let them come in. They shall be safe, and well entreated, be they who they may, French or English, roundheads or Cavaliers.

"Lord, Sir," exclaimed the old woman from the fireside, "they are the wife and daughter of as fine a gentleman as ever you saw, though he was sadly down-hearted when last he was here. They had just taken his blessed Majesty to Hampton Court at this time, and the gentleman was three months

hiding in our little place before he could get across the water. So he recollected us always, and just sent to Johnnie a week ago—”

“Hush, hush! mother,” said the young man, “his honour says they may come in; and I will go bring them. I’ll trust to his word; and they sadly want both food and rest. They can tell him what they think fit, when they see him themselves. Every man’s business, nowadays, is to hold his tongue, when he has not got the thumb-screws on him, and sometimes then too.”

Thus saying, he left the room; but the old lady, with a propensity to gossip which has sometimes been observed in ancient dames, came close up to the young lord’s side, and poured some information into his ear, which seemed to have, what novelists call, a thrilling influence upon him.

But ere she had half done, he started away from her, saying,

“I will go and see; he would never think of bringing them by the stables. There are but two sentries out, and doubtless they are fast asleep, for they were all tired to death. But we must have no accidents;” and opening the door, he was issuing forth, when he was evidently encountered by the coming party; and a sweet voice was heard to exclaim, “Bernard, Bernard! I was sure of it. I could not mistake that voice.”

“Who goes there?” cried another tongue at a little distance.

“A friend,” answered the voice of Bernard Marsh.

“Speak! give the countersign,” was the reply; but ere any one could answer, a small spot of red light appeared through the darkness, and the Earl, who well knew what it meant, had only time to throw himself between Lucy and the sentinel, when a pistol, which had hung fire for a moment or two,

in consequence of the dampness of the night, was discharged, and the ball passed through the young nobleman's coat.

"Too prompt!" said Bernard Marsh aloud, turning towards the man who had fired. "Do you not stop for the counter-sign? Send Sergeant Loftus. We must have better discipline here."

Thus saying, he led Lucy and Lady Langdale into the inn, and holding up his finger as a warning against noise; for several of his companions were sleeping around, he bade the hostess conduct the two ladies up-stairs, and see to their comfort, promising to join them in a few minutes. Lucy's hand lingered in that of her lover till they had reached the bottom of the stairs, and then it was withdrawn slowly, as if with regret, while even the eyes of Lady Langdale rested earnestly upon a face on which Lucette had, by this time, learned to read in charac-

ters not to be misunderstood, every generous and fine emotion. That countenance was now very grave, and with all a woman's quick apprehensions roused, Lady Langdale inquired in a low voice for her son.

"He is there," answered Bernard Marsh, pointing to one of the small beds let into the wall, "he is there, and quite well. Sir Edward, too, when last we heard, was well and in high spirits."

"But you are not in spirits, Bernard," said Lady Langdale.

"That reckless soldier firing directly at us, is enough to make one grave, dear lady," replied the young Earl; "but go, up, and if possible change your dress. You are very wet. I will hardly give you time, indeed; for I am eager to hear what can have brought you and Lucy hither."

He smiled as he spoke; but ere he stood

in the midst of the inn kitchen again, his face was graver than ever.

Little do those who are most dear to us know, how terribly they sometimes add to our grief and our anxiety when they seek to share the dangers we ourselves must necessarily undergo. I can well conceive the brave man turning coward, the wise man becoming a fool, if forced to see perils which, borne alone, would shake neither heart nor mind, encountered by those to whom all his wisdom can afford no guidance, his courage no protection.

The room was crowded again when he returned; for besides the old man and his son, there were the four men who had arrived with the travellers, the sentry who had fired so unguardedly, and the man whom the young lord had called Sergeant Loftus—one of those who on a former occasion has been seen with him in France.

“Relieve this sentinel, Loftus, and put him in arrest,” said the Earl. “Who is he, who in my troop fires his petronelle, before the countersign can be given?”

“I don’t know, my lord,” replied the sergeant, “he joined us at Lyme; and is well commended by Sergeant Haldimand. Perhaps ’twas but a mistake, though he is old soldier enough to know better.”

“Put him in arrest,” repeated Lord Dartmoor. “I must have no such mistakes. The report of a pistol is heard far. I will inquire into the matter more at large, to-morrow. Hark ye, Loftus,” and drawing him somewhat aside, he added, in a low voice, “watch Haldimand well; I doubt him. At the very first alarm, get the men under arms, and call me. A surprise in this indefensible place were fatal.”

“There is a good, large barn behind, my lord,” said the sergeant, “with a door big

enough for four horses to pass abreast. If people don't bring cannon against it, we could make it good as long as we had food."

"No," said the young lord, thoughtfully; "but at all events, if you can, pick out ten or twelve, who are not drunk, and send them up there with their horses bridled and saddled, ready for any emergency. Put some old soldier at their head, who is fit to seize an occasion."

"I'm your man," said a voice proceeding from a thin, gaunt, elderly man in the corner, whom neither Loftus nor Lord Dartmoor had observed, but who now came forward and spoke somewhat over-loud.

"Ha, Pierrot la Grange!" said the Earl, "so you have come over with your lady. What said you just now? But speak low, man, speak low! see that fellow is creeping towards the door. Stand, friend! stand, and

come back! Remember pistol bullets fly fast; and one will reach you ere you can get out."

The man turned doggedly and resumed his place in the middle of the room, while the young Earl continued his conversation with Pierrot and the sergeant.

"I say, my lord, I'm the man to put in the barn. First, because I'm an old soldier; and next, I am fit to seize an occasion. Only let me go at once; for if that brown jug stands looking me in the face, I shall be tempted once more, which were bad."

"Well, well then, go," said the Earl, "they can give you some beef out there, and you and Loftus can concert matters apart, only take good heed to the prisoner."

"He shall not give us legbail, I warrant, my lord," said Sergeant Loftus. "I had my doubts too—though it is not fit for one soldier to speak against another."

Lord Dartmoor looked at him with a grave, almost a sad expression of countenance—

“Alas, alas, Loftus!” he said; “that one principle, inherent as it is in human nature, linked to our hearts by our strongest and our feeblest sympathies, has done more to turn aside the course of well appreciated duty than covetousness or ambition or treason. Our first duty, Loftus, is to our God, our next to our country, our next to our King, and he who, having just cause, fears to say, ‘this man, my fellow soldier, my friend, my bosom companion, is to the best of my judgment a traitor,’ fails in the higher duty to subserve a lower claim. Why should not a soldier speak against a soldier, if he knows him to be false and treacherous? By the Lord above, if I thought my own brother harboured a thought against the cause we have both espoused, I would denounce him in face of earth and Heaven.

But no more to-night. Guard the man well—look well to Haldimand. Weariness may overcome me, and I may sleep; but I shall wake at the least sound. Let me have the most timely notice you can give. Go with him, Pierrot. You have many of the best points of a soldier in you, and may give both good help and advice.”

Sergeant Loftus hung his head, and retired. He felt indeed that he was rebuked; but that rebuke had been given with a tone and air which took all sting from reproof, and he determined that he would not close an eye that night if he fell from his horse with fatigue on the following day.

In the meantime, the good woman of the house had been busy with her new and, as it seemed, her favoured guests. She had hurried up-stairs, with her serving wench and her caldron, not forgetting, however, before she went, to pour out a bowl of hot soup for

her son and each of his comrades. A pair of saddle bags had been brought in and carried to the rooms above; and the old man had replenished the large stone jug from a barrel in the shed behind. Bernard Marsh stood for a moment or two in the midst of the kitchen, partly occupied with thoughts beyond my power to tell, partly with keen and rapid observation of the scene around him. He marked each door, each window in the room, glanced his eye over the thick, wooden shutters, and high lintels of the windows, saw every massive bolt and bar upon the gates, ran his eye over the faces of the waking men, and heard the hard breathing and measured snore of those who had fallen asleep.

"Let them slumber," said he to himself, "let them slumber; I must wake, if I can. Yet, poor human nature! how the spirit is clogged by the weakness of the clay."

Thus thinking, he spoke a few kindly

words to the old man's son, who was seated at the table enjoying, with the keen zest of hunger, his long delayed meal, and then took his way to the rooms above.

But there is no space to pause upon the explanations that were then given to him, or to relate how he was told that owing to the disturbed and ever changing state of parties in France, Mirepoix could afford no refuge to Madame de Langdale and her daughter, and how Belaye was actually in the hands of persons whose friendship was more than doubtful. He found that it had been judged by Sir Edward Langdale, as well as by themselves, that many parts of England would afford a much surer refuge than any place in France, and that he it was, who had dispatched young John Grey to meet them at the coast, and conduct them as far as Evesham, towards which place Sir Edward was on his march from the eastern part of England.

Bernard said not one word of the anxiety—nay, the apprehension—which was produced in his own heart, by what he thought, and thought rightly, the wild plunge which those he loved best had taken into the midst of a whirlpool of danger and difficulty; nor did he let them see how much their presence added to the embarrassment of one of the most difficult marches ever made across the country swarming with enemies. He spoke as cheerfully as Sir Edward had written, called their little party a “reinforcement,” and promised boldly to escort them safely to join the father and the husband, though he saw all the perils and the impediments in their way.

A few—a very few moments were given by him and Lucy to the sweet caress and the consoling words of love; and then, telling them that they must march at day-break on the following morning, he left them to

their short repose, and descended to the room below.

He found it in the abode of sleep. The old man and his wife, with colder blood in their veins than the rest, were dozing by the fire; their son and his three companions, finding every bed full, were slumbering round the table; and the first party of cavaliers were still pouring forth their heavy breaths from the places where they had cast themselves down to rest.

Lord Dartmoor stood for a few minutes in the midst of the kitchen, in one of those moments of agitated thoughts which sometimes will banish the comforter from our eyes, however weary; and he was just murmuring to himself the words, "No use, no use," when he thought he heard a step without, and raised his eyes to the door opening upon the road. It was shut and did not move; but at the little casement on the right hand,

Bernard plainly saw the figure of a man, and could catch a gleam from the inside of the cottage, touching upon a steel cap and a cross belt. He moved not for a moment, and the expression of his face hardly changed; but then, he advanced carelessly to the table, took a seat among the sleeping men, and folding his arms upon the board, leaned his head upon them, as if for slumber. A quarter of an hour passed, and he did not stir; and then there was a slight movement of the door. It opened about the breadth of three fingers, and yet all was still. It creaked a little, and opened wider and wider, till at length the entire figure of a man was seen, the sharp, grey eyes under the heavy brow, running round the room, and seeming to count the sleepers.

But at that moment, a hand, armed with a long horse-pistol, was raised above the table; and ere the man could do aught but

make a slight movement in retreat, Bernard Marsh had pressed the trigger. The hammer fell ; the report rang through the house ; and the steel cap clanged upon the brick floor.

CHAPTER XIV.

THOUGH the sound of a pistol at some distance in open air, an hour or two before, had not been able to awaken the sleeping cavaliers, it was different with the report of a shot fired so close to them. Up from the table, out of the chairs around, forth from the little beds at the side, sprang the suddenly alarmed denizens of the inn kitchen, and with the readiness of men accustomed to hourly peril, each of them had some weapon in his hand, while in the midst stood Lord Dart-

moor, with the pistol he had just fired still in his grasp, and the light, blue smoke of the explosion curling round him

“What is it?” cried one.

“Who fired that shot?” asked another.

“Hush!” exclaimed the young Earl, holding up his hand with a gesture of stern command.

All was silent for a moment, and the more experienced soldiers knowing at once what their leader meant, bent the head and listened eagerly. Feet running past were soon heard, and then the galloping of a horse.

“I fired that shot,” said the Earl, answering the last question. “Gentlemen, our march is betrayed! I had thought we might get to Evesham without fighting; for it were as well to bring up both men and horses fresh for the King’s service; but doubtless we shall be able to give a good account of whatever body of rebels we may meet to-

morrow. Lilburn and his men have gone far to the North, and are probably defeated ere now by the good Earl of Derby. Their force in these parts must be small. Some one take up that fellow and search his person. We may find proof upon him of who set him on, and also some information regarding the enemy. Henry," he added in a whisper to Lucy's brother, "creep quietly up-stairs and see if any one is stirring there, awakened by this noise. If you find them awakened, reassure them. If all is still, come down again."

"My lord, this looks like a cavalier," said one of those who had been raising the dead man; for dead he was, the bullet having passed right through his head.

"Then he looks not like what he was," replied Lord Dartmoor, approaching them; "he was a spy, and doubtless, a traitor. Do you not see his belt? and that iron cap is

London made, if ever I saw head-piece forged in Ivy Lane. If not, he was very unlucky; for had he not worn it he might have escaped till another day. What is that paper, Colonel Parry? Let me see!"

"It seems some directions," said the gentleman to whom he spoke, handing him the paper, "not very well written, nor very well spelled."

"‘Bring the exact tale of the malignants,’" said the Earl reading. "‘Get some speech of Sergeant H———.’ Sergeant Haldimand on my life—‘give that godly man to know that his tidings were like the waters of’—what is this word?—‘though bitter at first, may be sweetened hereafter. We have not God-fearing men enough at hand to smite the Amalekites to-day; and the iron and the charcoal are wanting; but if he can devise how to stay the swaggering idolators for but four hours, we shall come upon their footsteps

at the passage of the brook thou wottest of and slay them there. Fail not to bring the numbers as exact as may be, lest we fall into a snare ; and spread the tidings of our muster to all trusty men as thou passest along. Forget not, and let not our greedy fellow-soldier forget that a reward of one hundred pounds is offered for the head of that viper, the Earl of D——, dead or alive. He sleeps little of nights, it is reported, and is apt to wander, like the lion seeking whom he may devour. It were hard to take him alive ; but a chance shot might do good service, and would have its reward.’”

The young Earl smiled as he read, and so did several of his party, as they listened to this description of their leader ; and young John Grey, suggested—

“ Will it not be better to hang up that scoundrel Haldimand, my lord ? I have known him turn his jacket three times, if he

be the man I think. Father has a good stout bit of rope in the shed. It may have worse work to do."

"No," answered Lord Dartmoor; "no, I judge not, John. By my honour, gentlemen, were the King's business less pressing, I would willingly give these gentlemen an opportunity of coming up with the Amalekites. Methinks the writer of this unsigned paper is somewhat too confident, and if we did stay, the brook—that must be Sutton brook, some ten miles forward—might flow with other blood than ours. But that must not be. It has been a fault of many of our friends to forget the main object for some small advantage. The King by this time is in the very heart of the land, and every sword that can be drawn must hasten to him."

"Hurrah for the King!" said several voices round.

“Hurrah for the King, and the devil take Oliver’s nose !” cried another.

“The bankrupt brewer’s gone to bed,
Gone to bed, gone to bed,
The bankrupt brewer’s gone to bed,
Hulla, ho, ho !

“The bankrupt brewer’s gone to bed,
With a napkin round his head ;
What care I if he were dead ?
Hulla, ho, ho !”

halloed out one of the cavaliers, whose short sleep did not seem to have completely cured the effect of his potations.

Lord Dartmoor seemed a good deal annoyed at the unseemly noise, and twice essayed to stop it, raising his hand, and crying—

“Hush, gentlemen ! hush !” Not alone, perhaps, that he thought the sounds would waken those above, but unwilling, also, that sweet Lucy Langdale should be made so

harshly acquainted with the excesses of those with whom her father and her lover were forced to hold temporary companionship.

“Silence, gentlemen,” he exclaimed at length, using a louder tone himself. “You are probably breaking the rest of those whom, as cavaliers and gentlemen, you are bound to comfort and protect. You do not know that we have had other guests to-night besides you traitor—ladies journeying to join their husband and father, as loyal a subject as King Charles the First or King Charles the Second ever had—the brave Sir Edward Langdale. They go forward under our escort to-morrow morning; but well I know that the presence of ladies never took the edge off a true gentleman’s sword when it was drawn in their defence, and if we have to fight, we shall fight all the better because such eyes are looking upon us. Ah, Henry, ha all this noise awakened them?”

“Did you say my mother and my sister?” asked young Henry Langdale, eagerly catching, as he descended, the announcement the Earl had just made. “No; all was still above.”

“So let it be. They need rest,” replied Bernard. “Now, gentlemen, to council. Some one remove that spy; but let his body be more strictly searched. You have heard that if we can be detained for a few hours the Roundheads will be upon us, and perhaps in force. Though that unsigned paper is assuredly not the writing of a soldier, yet he may have some more practised people with him to-morrow. We must be upon our guard.”

“Were it not better to march at once?” asked one of the by-standers.

“No,” replied the Earl, almost haughtily. “They shall not say I fled. We all want rest. The horses more than any. Let us

go at the hour fixed, as if that paper had never fallen into our hands. We can have three hours more sleep ; but some one must see the sentries doubled round our post, he must pick the men, and make such arrangements that we be not taken at disadvantage."

"I will undertake that," said a hard-featured, elderly man ; "I know everyone of these boys, or most of them, and what each is fitted for—who will doze, and who will have both eyes wide awake. But I was just thinking what your lordship says is true. They may try to take us by surprise. This dead fellow had a companion. I heard him gallop off just as I tumbled out of bed, and doubtless he will bring them up quicker than they proposed."

"Perhaps so, perhaps not," replied the Earl, "these men were evidently not prepared for sudden action. I think, too, our party is

more numerous than they imagined, and if their spy has found it so, his report may possibly deter them from any movement, especially when they know that his comrade has been killed or taken, and their purposes divulged to us. No, no! They cannot be yet prepared. We have made as rapid a march as any on record, and have gained strength in almost every village. Unless some spite of fortune should have brought reinforcements for Cromwell this way, they have no force betwixt this and Worcester which we cannot cut through. But still we must miss no precaution. I thank you much, my good friend, for taking the charge of the guard off my shoulders; for I think I must have some rest. I have not slept to-night."

"Nor last night either," said the old soldier, gruffly. "I saw you steal out and go all the rounds when we were at the

‘Horse Shoe and Magpie.’ How you manage it, I know not. You are but a slim youth, and yet you do more work than any three men of twice your weight. Now, lads, all be quiet, and let the good lord have a little rest. I’ll warrant he is up before any of you to-morrow.”

The old man left the room, taking with him one of the younger officers; and two of the other men carried the corpse of the dead soldier into the shed behind the house. There they again searched his person, but in vain; nothing was found upon him but a small sum of money and a pack of well-thumbed cards, which showed, or seemed to show, that he was one of the loose characters who, in that age, floated between the two great parties, deceiving and betraying the one, and tolerated and employed by the other for certain serviceable qualities, which, in their eyes, like charity, covered a

multitude of sins, the most repugnant to their saintly principles. Lord Dartmoor remained in quiet conversation with young Henry Langdale till they returned, while of the rest of the Cavaliers, some sat and nodded on the seats around, some crept to their beds again, and soon were sound asleep once more. The incident of the night passed as a matter of small moment to men whose whole life was spent in daily peril and excitement. A man had been killed—a life had gone out—an active, busy human existence, with all its feelings and sympathies, its faults and follies, and mayhap its virtues, too, had been extinguished ; but what was that to them ? They had seen many a man so die—they were ready so to die the ensuing day themselves. We get too soft in our closets ; the battle-field is the place to steel men's hearts against the enervating sympathies of this most mortal state of being.

What were the feelings of the Earl of Dartmoor? His hand had fired the shot—his deliberate aim had taken the life of him who had just been carried out. His heart was as warm, and kind, and generous as any in the world—as unwilling to give pain, as liberal to afford pleasure, as tender of another's feelings, as careful of another's life; but it was by no means weak. He had felt no hesitation when he fired; he had felt no regret after it was done. He had done his duty. That was enough for him.

CHAPTER XV.

THE sun, an early visitor—and often, alas ! an unwelcome one at that time of year, was more than a hand's breadth below the horizon ; but it had sent its messengers forward, in the shape of slanting rays, which fringed the edges of the brown clouds with gold, and spread a yellow and increasing gleam through the gray sky. The rain had ceased ; the dawn was beautiful ; the promise of the coming day as bright as hope. But yet there were the tears of yesterday upon

the grass ; drops fell slowly from the leaves of the stunted trees ; and as the eye ranged over the moor, small ponds, swelled by the deluge of the night before, glistened in the growing light. It was calm, too. The wind, which, during the preceding evening had sported with the heavy water falling from the sky, as if to show how the finer element can master the more dense, dashing it here and there where it sought not to go, had sunk to a profound calm ; and you could hardly see the leaves of the aspen quiver on the spray.

But it needed no pouring rain or gust of wind to rouse Lord Dartmoor. He was awake with the first ray ; and a soldier's toilet was soon made. A plentiful ablution, and no more was wanted ; the fair hair, thrown back from the face, fell at once into its natural curls again ; and the pointed beard and long moustache needed no razor. The broad buff

belt across his shoulders was soon thrown on, and the blue scarf, with its sword-knot, took no long time to adjust. The whole process, perhaps, might occupy ten minutes; but while it was going on, any one—if any had been watching—might have seen that the form, apparently so slight and juvenile, was in reality one of great strength, that the chest was wide and expanded, the shoulders large and muscular, and that the arms, though somewhat long, were furnished with muscles clearly defined even to the eye, full of power and force. Each seemed distinct and separate, like the cordage of a vessel, but each was tremendously powerful in itself, and gave the idea both of vigour and activity.

While the sword was being examined and thrust back into the sheath, and the pistols received fresh priming, Bernard Marsh gazed upon the sleeping companions around him, who had not been awakened by his prepar-

ations; and though perhaps he might envy them in a degree the power of casting off so completely the load of thought, he could not but feel that, blessing though it be, this insusceptibility is a blessing of the lower order.

“Well, let them sleep a little longer,” he said to himself, “ten minutes of such sleep as that, is to them worth a world of anxious waking. The time allowed is not yet quite expired. Let them sleep. I am too impatient.

But Bernard Marsh was deceiving himself perhaps a little, or while exacting as strictly as circumstances permitted the punctual performance of duty, he was always willing to lighten the labour to others by taking the greater part of the burden upon himself; and although he quietly woke Henry Langdale, and bade him go up and rouse his mother and sister, in order to prepare for marching as soon as the sun had really risen, he himself

walked forth to visit the sentries, and give the necessary orders for early departure.

Seated on a stone mounting-block, between the house and the stables, he found the old soldier who had undertaken the watch during the last hours of darkness. The good man could hardly be said to be asleep, though he was nodding. It was the slumber, if slumber it was at all, of the large house-dog, ready to spring in a moment at the throat of an enemy who had perhaps fancied himself unseen. He started up the moment his leader's step was near him; but there was neither any appearance of drowsiness, nor any attempt to conceal or excuse it. He neither stretched, nor yawned, nor complained of the heavy fatigue of the last four days' march; but merely told the Earl that all had gone well, though Sergeant Haldimand had seemed very uneasy.

"Let all the men be roused," said the

Earl, "the horses saddled, and the party ready to start in half an hour. But, my good friend, let the priming of every pistol be seen to, and every sword easy in the sheath. I have a feeling that we may have to draw them. It may be but a fancy, but these are times when precaution is never useless."

"It is useless in no times," said the other ; "that Haldimand would have been off twice this last night, if you had not taken precautions ; but he vows it is all because he will not be suspected, and that he will not serve with your troop, if you do not feel confidence in him. If I were you, I would shoot him before we go. It would save trouble now and hereafter."

Lord Dartmoor smiled, and shook his head, saying.

"Waste of powder, Master Clarke, waste of powder ! You are not economical. We may make him shoot some of his friends, be-

fore the day is over, and perhaps make them shoot him; so there will be a double saving. But as I have said, get all the men under arms, and in the saddle; those in the barn have their horses ready. Send up the ladies' horses first. Then bring up the rest. Remember, you have but half an hour."

"It is done, my lord! it is done," said the old soldier; "there is only one thing more, I wished to say. If I should be tumbled over the crupper, by a chance shot, remember I have a boy about fourteen, at South Meam. You take care of him. His mother, God made an angel of, six years ago. You take care of him; breed him up to love his King, and show him how to live as I have lived, and die as I died."

The Earl pressed his hand firmly; and the good soldier felt that pressure was as good as a vow. The young lord then took

his way towards the house again, and in the kitchen gave manifold orders, which, in a regularly organized force, might well have been spared ; but though, all or most, were soldiers who had seen some service, yet all were volunteers who had obeyed a sudden call to follow him in the King's need ; and if I may use the term, had not yet "jostled into their places" in the regiment he had been raising.

There were few supernumeraries there. Accustomed to attend upon himself, Lord Dartmoor's own domestics aided to swell the ranks of his fighting men ; and the only attendance required by their lord was the care of his horses. All were by this time busy in the inn ; one man had wakened another, and though there were those who yawned, and those who scratched the head, each had made some progress towards that renewed activity which was the life of every day.

Henry Langdale was not present, having gone up to arouse his mother and sister ; and the good dame of the house and her husband were busy in preparing all they could supply for some food for the soldiers before they marched. Young Grey was up, and was leaving the door just as Lord Dartmoor entered, and a great deal of eager bustle was going on about the stables, where so many of the troopers had been sleeping.

“ Well, Henry, how have they slept ? ” asked the Earl at the foot of the stairs, meeting his young protégé just as he was about to descend, “ are they getting ready quickly ? ”

“ They are as busy as newly-wakened bees,” answered Henry ; “ are you going up to see them ? ”

“ As I come down,” said Bernard Marsh ; “ for I am going to the top of the house, to take a look over the country round. It is

flat and bare enough till we get to Woodford Bridge, if I remember right ; but it is still as well to examine the way, for the barrenness which lets us see, will also let us be seen. You go down and keep the men alert, Henry. The sun, you see, is just above the edge of the sky."

Thus saying, he passed on, reached the little corridor—in a room issuing from which Lady Langdale and Lucy had passed the night—mounted another short flight of steps, and having learned the position of the trap-door from the good dame below, issued forth upon the roof. It was somewhat dangerous climbing ; for as was then almost universal in England, the angles were acute and many ; but at length the young Earl reached a point from which he could see all around.

The view was very extensive on three sides. It was not exactly a purely English landscape ; for its principal features were ex-

ceptional ; but it was a landscape very characteristic of England. The sun, as Lord Dartmoor had said, had just burst above the horizon, and spread his early rays over the whole scene, too feeble as yet to raise the deluge of the night before, even into the light mists that often hang about the first footsteps of the morn, yet bright enough to change every drop upon the trees or on the grass, into the semblance of liquid rubies. On one side—the side by which the young Earl and his troop had come—the view was cut off by some wooded ground and hedges ; but about that, he cared very little ; for that part of the country he knew to be loyal, and there was no chance of pursuit from that quarter. On the three other sides, spread the flat moor of which we have spoken heretofore. Those who have travelled much in Worcestershire and its neighbourhood, must well remember it ; for it offers a remark-

able contrast to the pleasant undulations of that most charming country, and though there are slight inequalities—a dell here and there—a little monticule, flanked with dark firs—a craggy belt of wood—a sand pit—or a low ridge of barren gravel—he who mounts up even to the roof of a low house, can see over the whole heath, and note an object not much bigger than a lap-dog.

One general glance, and then slowly and deliberately the Earl's eye ran over the whole extent of the plain, as it spread out from a line about two miles from him to the limit of the horizon, where some hedge-rows and dark trees showed that cultivation and fertility were once more prevalent. Gradually the circle of his glance became narrower and narrower, left the wide plain, and scanned the country nearer to the spot on which he stood.

That little inn, as I have shown, was the

last outpost of man's industry, as it were, upon the outskirt of the waste. There was the house itself, which probably derived four-fifths of its custom from being the last place for repose or refreshment before crossing the river; there were the stables, but a short distance off, the shed behind, two or three little out-buildings of no great consequence, and the large barn, standing a good deal farther back to the east. Between the barn and the stables, was a considerable kitchen-garden, and a field of peas, not yet ripe. There were various little groups of trees scattered around, and one long, low copse of osiers, with a small stream running through it, which began, Heaven knows where, and terminated at the same distance, forming a narrow line which marked the commencement of the actual moor. Near the stables and near the house were several groups of soldiers, and one or two men were hanging about the

sheds, while some foreign-looking servants held the horses which had brought the two ladies during the night before, and were endeavouring to put the weather-stained caparisons in somewhat decent trim.

Such was the scene that met the eyes of Lord Dartmoor, when first he looked forth. What is it he sees now, which makes his look change and his eye strain upon a low dip in the moor, about a quarter of a mile distant? It is that small gleaming line which looks like a serpent creeping towards where he stands, while that little row of men's heads in steel caps, upon the left, seems coming up to meet them?

He pauses to count, to calculate. They are not many. Some two hundred men in all. But then behind that line of osiers, there is a gleam of corselets and buff coats coming on quick—at a sharp trot.

No time is to be lost. In five minutes
they will be before the inn. But five minutes
in love or war is everything.

CHAPTER XVI.

A FEW steps—there were hardly three—brought the Earl of Dartmoor to the little, narrow, deal-lined corridor, in one of the rooms branching from which, Lucy and her mother had passed the night. The door was open, as were several others, and from the latter, some figures were seen passing towards the top of the stairs which descended to the kitchen. Young Henry Langdale stood quietly talking to his mother and sister, and the maid appeared tranquilly placing some

travelling apparel in large leathern saddle-bags.

The peacefulness of the scene formed a strange contrast with the impetuous haste which had possession of the young Earl's bosom—ay, and even with that which his countenance displayed.

“Good Heaven! Bernard, what is the matter?” exclaimed Lucy, the moment she saw him. “Something has gone wrong.”

“Keep to your room, dear girl,” replied her lover. “The enemy is upon us. Go not near the windows whatever you may hear; but remain quietly seated till I send for you. Stay with them, Henry; you shall have others with you in a moment. Throw the beds across the windows, and keep the ladies out of fire.”

He was turning to depart; but seeing the terror in Lucy's face, he added a word of comfort—

“These men are not many,” he said; “we will soon dispose of them.”

Then bounding down the stairs, into the midst of the cavaliers, who, some wholly and some half-dressed, were effacing the remnants of sleep by applications to old John Grey’s stone bottle, he exclaimed, aloud—

“Arm! arm, my friends! The Roundheads are coming round the copse in force. Bar up the windows. Hark, young John Grey, can you—dare you run like lightning to the barn? Here, take this order,” and he wrote in pencil, with a rapid hand, a few words upon a scrap of paper, torn from his pocket-book. As the young man sprung forward to receive his commands, the young Earl added—“You, Luke, speed to the stable. Bring up what men are ready, and all the powder and ball you can find. Some horses, too, to the shed, where that dead fellow lies, if you have time; but remember, you have

not a moment to spare. In three minutes they will be upon the green. Surrender?" he continued, turning sharply round; "who talks of surrender? Were they ten to one, here would I lose my life, or here would I win it. Quick, boy, quick! Time is everything."

The young man ran forth to obey his orders; and the Earl, turning instantly to the rest, gave directions for securing all access to the house, placed sentries at the door of the shed and at the back door of the inn, took measures for assuring immediate support to any point that might be attacked, and placed as many men as he could collect at every window.

"We have nothing but our pistols, my lord," said one of the cavaliers; "if we had but the horses, we might do something."

"We will do something without the

horses," said Bernard Marsh, in a confident tone. "This day and this place shall be famous in story, if each man does well his duty to his King. Reserve your fire, my men. Let each shot tell. He who now throws away an ounce of lead is a spend-thrift. You, Harding and Moresby, see to the ordering of the men. I saw a ladder without there. Let it be brought in. We must not let them get at the upper windows. I must go out before the door, to see what is going on."

Though all was spoken with extreme rapidity, every order was clear and precise, and from the confidence of all around in their young leader, was obeyed with readiness and punctuality. The lower part of each window was blocked up with whatever was nearest at hand. Stools, tables, benches were brought forward to enable the little garrison to fire from the small spaces left

above ; and as many as could stand upon such frail platforms, were posted so as to have the most advantageous aim at an approaching enemy.

“ I could not count them, gentlemen ; but they cannot be two to one,” said Lord Dartmoor, with his hand upon the door, “ and they can have no cannon. They had not time, for all they had ready prepared have gone north. Surely two Cavaliers are equal to one Roundhead.”

He paused a single moment, as if to calm his unusual excitement, and then opening the door of the inn, went forth.

All was as yet tranquil before the inn. There was the little green, with its flock of solitary goslings, stretching their long necks and biting at the short grass ; there were the two or three scraggy trees, still dripping with yesterday's rain ; there was the troop of cocks and hens strutting about in the morn-

ing sunshine, while chanticleer's shrill clarion seemed to crow defiance to all enemies. But all else was quiet, except where at the stable were seen some men, running across towards the inn, with armfuls of carbines, and others hauling along bagfuls of powder and bullets. Two or three were also seen bringing forward horses, or pausing to put their accoutrements in order. At the barn, somewhat farther distant, all was still, except that a man once or twice put his head forth and looked out for a moment.

"Take them in and distribute them," said the Earl to the lads who were carrying the powder and balls: "are any of the men coming up?"

"Yes, my lord," said one of the young men, "Sergeant Haliday's guard is all ready but their banderols, and will be here in a moment."

"Go in, then, and stay there," said the

leader ; " each man must be a General now, especially if I fall. If so, Strange commands you, remember. We want some horses much. Those fellows are delaying too long."

At that moment there was the sound of a trumpet on the road ; and the head of the enemy's advance began to appear ; but at the distance of some two hundred yards the troops halted as if to reconnoitre ; and some of the cavalier horses were hurried rapidly across the green, and led to the shed at the back of the inn, while a body of some twenty men, well armed and in good order, marched deliberately as if they were on parade, from the stables to the house.

Lord Dartmoor looked once or twice into the inn kitchen, where all presented itself as might have been expected, the young men bustling and active with somewhat ill-directed exertions, the old soldiers calm and stern,

looking out from time to time to see what was going on, and then turning quietly to their work again, as if they neither feared nor cared much for the result.

“This little brush is lucky,” said Lord Dartmoor to one of the younger soldiers, who showed more restless anxiety than he liked; “it will teach you to be cool, and will make better soldiers for King Charles on a more important day. Go in—close the door; do not lock it, you foolish boy! I am not going to fight all those fellows alone.”

As he spoke, the sound of a trumpet was heard from the other side of the green, and three horsemen were seen advancing slowly abreast; one of them carrying a white flag. Lord Dartmoor stood calmly before the door, with his arms crossed upon his chest, while some more horses were run across the open space behind him.

“We would speak with a man calling him-

self the Earl of Dartmoor," said an old weather-beaten officer, in a buff coat and cuirass. "Will you lead us to him?"

"Your journey need be but short," said the young nobleman. "I am he. What is your business with me?"

"Thou? thou?" said the other. "Thou art but a youth. This is a famous soldier, though unhappily for himself and his country, a bitter malignant."

"Whether famous or not, whether malignant or not," replied Bernard Marsh, "I am that Earl of Dartmoor of whom you speak. What would you with me?"

"Well, then," replied the old man, "I think thou wouldst not lie to me; and I answer, we bear you a flag of truce, hoping to spare the effusion of Christian blood this day."

"I never lie," replied the Earl, "be that for others. What have you to propose?"

“Good quarter,” answered the other, “and what we can do for thee with the Parliament, seeing thou makest no resistance. We have thee in a snare, young man; and it were better for thee to yield to force thou canst not resist.”

“The partridge is caught in the net,” answered Lord Dartmoor; “the eagle or the falcon breaketh through. Such is your proposal. Now hear mine. I will give you ten minutes to retire from that road; and I will not pursue you nor attack you on your march, if you behave sweetly and discreetly, as you call it yourself; but if you retire not, and show any signs of waylaying me and my men, the consequences be on your head.”

“So be it,” replied the other; “understand, I summon thee to surrender. Sayst thou yea or nay?”

“Nay,” answered the young Earl, calmly, “and now, Sir, enough of flags of truce.

You have sent one ; and I have received it. I warn you to send no more ; for more I will not receive. You had better retire, for your men are advancing your line, which mine are not likely to tolerate."

"They do so but to give Captain Shorefield's corps time to come up," answered the other. "However, I have your answer, and I go," and seeing another small party advancing from the stables, it might be towards the house, it might be to cut off his retreat, the old gentleman made a retrograde movement towards his own people with no slight haste.

Now there can be no doubt that in every class of the Parliamentary army there were men of as high courage and as great military skill as the world ever saw ; but it is certain that, in the haste and confusion with which reinforcements were sometimes levied, people of very different qualities crept in, and very

often a force which looked well on paper, and perhaps might be drilled into an efficient corps, was found in the beginning to be incompetent. Moreover in that army, as in most others, there were to be found persons whose genius was assuredly not military, whom nature, age, or circumstances had rendered somewhat nervous, but who, seeking distinction, wealth, or fame, occasionally took arms on the side of the dominant party, and could screw their courage to the sticking point so far as to go through scenes most abhorrent to them without showing too prominently the weakness which in reality beset them. Many of these men rose to respectable positions; and zeal, in what was considered the good cause, covered the frailties which might otherwise have been disastrous to themselves. That they were sometimes disastrous to the side with which they had taken part, none who reads the history of those times can

doubt ; but the genius and vigour of Cromwell and several of the Parliamentary officers, and the insubordination and rashness of many of the bravest Cavaliers, more than compensated for any deficiency on the part of the commonwealth.

But, bred from his infancy almost to arms, and keen in his observation of human nature, Bernard Marsh had speedily concluded that the old man who had come forward with the flag of truce, notwithstanding his calm and assured demeanour, was one of those who, imagining he saw an easy success before him, had put himself forward to cut off a small party of royalists, without either much experience in war or much vigour of character ; and his hasty retreat to the head of his troop confirmed that impression. The Earl's eye too, running over the line of the enemy, at once detected in them unmistakable signs of a fresh and undisciplined levy. Here a suit

too big for the man who wore it, there a horse evidently taken from the plough or the cart, a gap in the line at this place, a crowd at that, showed plainly that he had raw recruits before him; and, though he doubted not, that there were older and better soldiers among them, he turned towards the house again with better assurance than he had gone forth. "One moment of panic," he thought, "and they are all gone."

On entering the inn, he found it filled with soldiers. Every window was garnished with as many men as it could afford room for, and some had even climbed up to the top of the house, and were prepared with pistol and gun to give any attacking party a warm reception.

"How many men," he asked, "are still in the stable?"

"Some forty, Sir," replied one of his troopers: "they thought they could not get across with the horses."

“Better where they are,” replied the Earl, “if they do but act at the proper moment. Here, take this order—run for your life, and do not return.”

A few words were again written on a scrap of paper; but Bernard stopped the man for an instant, asking,

“Who commands there?”

“Strange, my lord,” replied the soldier.

“A good man!” said the Earl; “all is safe. Tell him we will scatter those men in five minutes, if they do not move off without fighting—now, quick! give him that.”

The man departed and ran across the green, and though a few shots were fired at him ere he reached the stables, the Earl watched him from the door and saw him enter unhurt.

“Now, lock and bar that door,” said the Earl, “and let the men at the side windows take care no one comes near it with petard or

powder-bag. I go up for a moment to watch their next movements. We shall soon put yon flock of sparrows to flight, or I am mistaken—Hal Luxmore, get a ladder, if one can be found, to the light above the door. You can have two guns there.”

Thus saying he began to mount the stairs, and perhaps it may be forgiven him, even by the most military reader, if we confess that he paused for a moment at the door of Lucy Langdale’s room, and just put his head in, saying,

“Fear not, my love. Those men, though rather more numerous than we, are nothing but raw recruits. They will soon be disposed of.”

She answered not, but merely pressed his hand ; and with a nod to Henry, and a brief word of encouragement to the men who were standing at the window with him, the young Earl climbed up to the roof.

The Roundheads had, as yet, made no forward movement ; and at first there seemed a good deal of confusion among them ; but, after gazing for a minute or two, Lord Dartmoor saw some fifty of the troopers dismount. A party of ten or twelve in scattering order then advanced towards the inn, while the rest of those on foot followed in firm array about twenty yards behind the first, and the cavalry wheeled upon the green, both covering their rear and menacing the stables. For a moment the young Earl continued to watch them ; then, saying to himself, " There are better soldiers among them—this must be looked to," he sprang down the stairs into the kitchen.

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